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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE ARTISTIC DEPICTION OF MAN-WOMAN RELATIONSHIPS BY SIGBJØRN OBSTFELDER AND EDVARD MUNCH

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Artistic Depiction of Man-Woman Relationships by Sigbjørn Obstfelder and Edvard Munch submitted by Bente Roed Cochran in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Supervisor

Date June 17, 1976

ABSTRACT

This thesis proposes to examine selected works by two young Norwegian contemporaries, the neo-romantic writer, Sigbjørn Obstfelder and the painter, Edvard Munch. The two artists shared a common cultural background and environment and, in their respective artforms, they often expressed similar ideas.

One theme was selected for study, namely how the two artists interpreted and depicted the relationships between man and woman. To illustrate our discussion we have chosen the short novel, Korset, written by Obstfelder in 1896, and paintings and graphic works by Munch primarily from the late 1880s and throughout the 1890s.

The 1870s and the 1880s, the formative years of Obstfelder and Munch, were particularly rich years in the history of Norwegian artistic life, producing works which are still highly regarded for their innovative ideas and styles. Many intellectuals and social reformers championed the rights of woman and reviewed the inter-relationships between man and woman.

In the first part of the thesis we have concentrated on a discussion of the cultural climate and the artistic background of Obstfelder and Munch to show their involvement in and awareness of the prevailing cultural and social trends. We have also sought to establish the amount of contact between the two artists and, finally, to review the critical literature as it applies to this chosen topic.

The second part of our study consists of a detailed examination of man-woman relationships,divided according to three phases, the beginning, culmination, and termination, where the written and visual works highlight each other.

Our conclusion shows the extent of similarity to be found in the two artists' expression of the theme of man-woman relationships.

The arts of sculpture, painting and music, which seem so rich and boundless, are in fact restricted to a cycle of recurring themes. Great artists do not extend the traditional stock of subjects: the dying man, the woman in love, the suffering mother, and so on. On the contrary, they show their aesthetic vigour in cleansing those themes of the coarse and trivial layer deposited by inferior artists, revealing once more in its original simplicity, the iridescent jewel.

Ortega y Gasset[1]

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OBSTFELDER AND MUNCH:

THE GROWTH OF AN ARTISTIC INTEREST

Introduction

Having gained its independence from Denmark in 1814, Norway became more aware of its heritage than it had been able heretofore, and although it did not separate from Sweden until 1905, its internal freedoms being greater, it began to develop a unique and spirited national outlook. From the 1830s through the following three decades National Romanticism was highly influencial on belles-lettres, the main writers being Henrik Wergeland and J. S. C. Welhaven. By the 1870s Realism had gained popularity in Norwegian intellectual circles, later developing toward Naturalism. The major realistic writers were Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Henrik Ibsen who, through their dramatic works, solidified Norway's position as a young nation that could produce exceptional dramatic works concerned with current political, social, and interpersonal topics. The last three decades of the 19th century were exceptionally rich in literary variety and output. The interest in moral and social issues grew during the 1870s and 1880s and was discussed in current literature. However, in the 1890s some writers such as Hans Kinck, Knut Hamsun, and Sigbjørn Obstfelder were directing their efforts toward individuals rather than society. Poetry was revived during the Neo-romantic period of the 1890s (described by Christen Collin as decadent) through the poems of Obstfelder and Vilhelm Krag. Their lyric verses were carefully constructed to convey deep sentiments through unconventional poetic metres often tending toward melodic prose. During this period Norwegian intellectuals came into contact with the writings of Turgeniev, Mallarmé, Nietzsche, Strindberg, and Dostoievsky, so that Norwegian letters

received a further impulse from abroad.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century Norway had not only progressive writers but also internationally known visual artists, particularly the sculptor Gustav Vigeland and the painter Edvard Munch. Romanticism had lost its influence by the 1850s and was replaced by a realistically oriented painting with subject matter closely related to contemporary life and favoring an accurate and careful recording of detail. In the last quarter of the century artists became interested in plein-air landscape painting originated by the French Impressionists. Before that time Norway had had a number of able, but not internationally recognized, visual artists such as Julius Middelthun, Hans Gude, Johan Christian Dahl, Adolph Tidemand, and Erik Werenskiold all of whom adhered to already established styles, attempting primarily to perfect techniques and craftmanship rather than to originate and perpetuate new artistic developments. Some, like Christian Krohg, were interested in Naturalism, their works often including a social message, while others, like Frits Thaulow, were primarily concerned with the pictorial treatment of painting.

The realistic presentations of social problems preoccupied intellectuals during the middle of the century but toward the end of the 1880s and throughout the 1890s the tendency shifted away from determinism toward a more subjective, symbolic literature and painting. The so-called objective reality was now of lesser importance and the writers, as well as some visual artists, found more of a challenge in delving into and depicting the artist's, or his characters', experiences of reality. The emphasis having shifted from the general to the specific, these artists were

more concerned with man's soul. Two contemporaries, Sigbjørn Obstfelder (1866-1900) and Edvard Munch (1863-1944), contributed significantly to this last period. Their works are examples of unique and highly personal additions to their country's artistic heritage.

Munch is internationally known and recognized for his paintings and graphic works as a precursor of Expressionism. Obstfelder is perhaps less known outside of Scandinavia, although details from his life and personality served as sources for Rainer Maria Rilke's narrator in Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge.[2] His literary output, given a short lifespan, includes a remarkable collection of poems, a few plays, and a number of interesting prose works showing his sensitive awareness of mankind's inner nature. Likewise, Munch, early in his career, became interested in depicting states of consciousness, rather than following established realistic or impressionist modes of painting.

Since Obstfelder and Munch were well acquainted with each other and had been exposed to the same intellectual climate in Oslo, it is desirable to examine their artistic output in further detail to illuminate how they presented their ideas to their audiences and how their works center on shared interests. Obstfelder and Munch in their works frequently examined the theme of man-woman relationships. Their depicted characters were Everyman figures who through their heightened sensitivity experienced universal reactions to their partner. The relationship showed the union of man and woman in all its phases from happiness to sadness and how this interrelationship is consciously experienced by the couple. While they both were concerned with universal human emotions,

Obstfelder's characters were usually depicted as introspective and capable of deep feelings, but they rarely displayed the passionate feelings of Munch's characters. None the less, these two Norwegian artists reveal in their writings and paintings similar interests in subjective content.

Biographical and Cultural Backgrounds

The seventh of sixteen children, Obstfelder was born and grew up in Stavanger. During the late 1860s and again in the early 1880s the port city entered a period of economic depression, with the result that his large middle class family, having to rely on the father's bakery income, met with hard times. However, Obstfelder, a capable student, was encouraged to pursue his studies, taking his artium (comparable to a high school diploma) in 1884. Desiring to continue his education at the University of Oslo, Obstfelder was aided financially by a number of well-meaning people in Stavanger who wished to help the bright student. Obstfelder arrived in Oslo in the fall of 1884 and spent nearly one year preparing for the entrance exams, and most of another year as a private tutor before finally embarking on the study of philology in 1886. Although he became quite involved in the intellectual life centered around the university, he abandoned his studies after two years in order to transfer to Oslo's Technical School, where he tried to emulate his youngest brother, Herman, an engineer, who had emigrated to the United States. Eventually, without ever graduating, Obstfelder joined him in 1890, for a very unhappy year in the United States, which culminated in a nervous breakdown shortly after his return to Oslo. Obstfelder's interests and talents were numerous as he was a gifted mathematician, musician, and writer. His interest in mathematics led him toward engineering but, as it became evident during his American stay, this profession gave him little satisfaction. He returned to Oslo determined to pursue a career as a violinist and composer, but

through the first half of the 1890s he hesitated between musical and literary interests. Literary endeavors were not new to Obstfelder, since through high school and university he had written poems and essays which had been published in student and professional periodicals.

During the period following his recovery from the nervous breakdown he renewed his association with the intellectual friends from his university days so that it was primarily through the encouragement and prompting of Jens Thiis, an art and literature student, and Vilhelm Krag, an avant-garde poet, that Obstfelder seriously returned to writing. Eventually Krag and Obstfelder became known as the leading Neo-romantic writers of Norway. Krag had published his poems in 1891 and was instrumental in urging Obstfelder to have his poems published, and in helping with the practical arrangements. It is reported that Krag arranged with Munch the execution of vignettes for Obstfelder's collection, called Digte, published 1893; however, the Munch vignettes did not materialize.[3]

As the reviews were favorable, this publication signified Obstfelder's artistic breakthrough. Over the next seven years Obstfelder published additional poems, short stories, novels, and plays mainly in literary magazines throughout Northern Europe, but books published during his lifetime were few, consisting of To novelletter, 1895, Korset, 1896 (being his most popular work, it subsequently appeared in three editions), and De røde draaber, 1897. While the above list is not extensive, it and the manuscripts published after Obstfelder's death add up to a unique contribution because of their innovative and evocative literary content and style; thus Obstfelder has often

been called "den første modernist i nordisk litteratur".[4] In prose works like Liv, Sletten, and En praests dagbog he explored the innermost feelings of an individual, a theme also explored in his dramatic works such as De røde draaber, Om Vaaren, and Esther. However, the plays were probably the least convincing and successful of his writings. In addition to poems, short stories, novels, and dramas, Obstfelder wrote a sizeable number of essays and polemic articles pertaining to contemporary topics in the sociological, cultural, and artistic spheres, as for instance his essays on the contemporary artists Edvard Munch[5] and Gustav Vigeland.[6] His artistic writings were introspectively oriented, subjective, sensitive, and personal, frequently using first-person singular in the prose works. With his poems, Obstfelder, deviating from the traditional structure, introduced a new form into Norwegian literature, linking the stanzas together with free undulating rhythms, not completely free of rhyme, but at times tending toward pure prose.

In his private life Obstfelder often voiced his longing for a woman with whom he could establish a true relationship. He did marry in 1898, but the marriage did not prove a happy one from the outset with the couple actually spending relatively little time together.

At his death in 1900 of a respiratory disease, Obstfelder had proven with his sensitive poems and prose works that he was a lyricist of high quality who attempted "with the utmost delicacy, to follow the twists and turns, the evasions, the withdrawals and the probings of a soul's progress in an exploration of this world".[7]

Edvard Munch, born three years earlier than Obstfelder, grew up in Oslo where his father was a medical doctor. The Munch family had for generations contributed to and had an appreciation of Norway's intellectual and artistic heritage. Contrary to Obstfelder there is no evidence that Munch had difficulties in choosing a career as he always knew he would be a painter. He was trained in the basic naturalistic mode prevalent in Norway in the early 1880s but through his extensive travels between 1885 and 1909 he also became aware of artistic developments in France, Germany, and elsewhere in Scandinavia. Obstfelder and Munch, like Henrik Ibsen, spent much time away from Norway but they were still basically Nordic artists, who kept close contacts with the artistic and cultural climates of their homeland. Munch had participated in group shows from 1883 on, and in 1889 he had his first one-man show. He had his brief invitational exhibition in Verein Berliner Künstler in 1892 in Berlin which was highly successful in bringing him public notoriety. These exhibitions were followed by numerous shows of his art throughout continental Europe. These added to his reputation, but failed to provide a very stable income for some time to come. Among his best known works are Pubertet, Det syke Barn, Skrik, the University Aula decorations,Oslo, his full length portraits, and his innovative graphic production. He did not limit himself to oil painting but explored the wide range of his visual medium and was especially successful in his prints.

Munch has been classified at various times as a forerunner of Expressionism, as a Symbolist, or as a decadent painter. He is rather difficult to categorize because he is so much an individualist with broad and

controversial interests. As Obstfelder has been called a "modernist" so could this same term be applied to Munch. He was instrumental in provoking the transition of Northern European painting into the twentieth century in terms of both style and content. This would account for his art being resisted for a long time by the conservative critics of the day thus requiring a relatively long time for him to be accepted by private and public collectors.

As evident from the extensive literature on this artist, his art can be interpreted on many and widely diverging levels. His works are concerned with human relationships and human existence, with fear, love, insecurity, death, passion, and sorrow being the major themes. After his nervous breakdown and his subsequent recovery, 1908-09, many critics have suggested that, as illustrated by his first major work after his illness, the Aula decorations for Oslo University, his subject matter changed. None the less, he had essentially determined his artistic direction and subject matter during the late 1880s and 1890s and it is the works from this period that established him in artistic circles. Themes first explored during these early years were quite often used later, so it would be incorrect to suppose that Munch had completely disassociated himself from works prior to the nervous breakdown.

Munch settled permanently in Norway in 1909 and continued painting until his death in 1944, thus having full opportunity of developing his art through all phases of a long lifespan. Unlike Obstfelder, he was able to enjoy artistic and commercial success later in life as his art was much sought after by institutional and private collectors.

Haftmann characterizes Munch as "the great image-maker of the decade [1890s], not so much a 'painter' as an 'artist', less concerned with the anatomy of the pictorial organism than with creating images reflecting the inner life of his contemporaries",[8] and we might add also his own inner life. Such a statement could apply equally to Obstfelder for the means of expression in their respective art forms were innovative, and the resulting images were unusual. Both of them used their formal vehicles of expression, words, color, and line, to express that which is behind the visible.

Similar convergences can be detected during their formative years, because during this period, and while they both travelled extensively, they became interested in the cultural, literary, and artistic tendencies in Oslo. The Saedeligheds fejde (Morality Feud) of the 1870s and the Bohême fejde (Bohemian Feud) of the 1880s were movements which caused controversy in Norway because of the stress upon personal liberation for woman and a re-evaluation of her role in society and in interpersonal relationships. While Obstfelder and Munch adhered to some of the concepts advocated by these movements, they may not be categorized as defenders of women's rights as set out by emancipators, even though some of their female characters could be interpreted in such a fashion. Instead, they were turning their explorations inward by attempting to express their subjective and psychological feelings, needs, and drives, rather than to set guidelines for education, divorce laws, and morality.

In many facets of Scandinavian intellectual life Georg Brandes was a major influence. His plea for an active debate of current problems by modern authors,

strongly voiced in his Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature, 1872, was also heeded and acted upon in Norway. Among the topics debated forcefully and openly in the last decades of the nineteenth century were the sexual mores, the role and rights of woman in society, and the relationship between man and woman - subjects which gave rise to two movements, the first being the Saedeligheds fejde and the second the Bohême fejde.

The Saedelighed fejde of the 1870s, partly initiated by the then more readily accessible and already translated The Subjection of Women by John Stuart Mill, was primarily concerned with exposing and improving the status of women in educational opportunities, marriage and legal rights. The spokesmen, among them Camilla Collett and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, believed in a single standard of sexual morality for men and women and advocated intellectual and public participation in the movement, so that women could progress toward individual liberation and equal social standing with men. In the early 1880s the movement had two objectives, one advocating that women be allowed to vote and be politically influencial, and the other stressing the need for equality and freedom in their personal lives.[9] Collett wrote about the emancipation of women while Bjørnson and Aasta Hansteen not only wrote but also lectured extensively on this same subject. Henrik Ibsen was also aware of and participated in the ongoing debate, his most prominent contribution being Et Dukkehjem, 1879, which gave rise to new public controversy because Nora left her husband, children, and home. Downs proposed that the public outcry was caused for two reasons:

> The first was the invasion in depth of a terrain which drama, that most 'public' of literary forms, had so far only rarely and in a very gingerly manner approached and which it was devoutly hoped that the critical spirits of the age would pass by, the Sanctuary of matrimonial intimacies. The second was the defence, implied in the whole tenour of the play and proclaimed by Nora herself, of every human being's right to act on private judgement in the teeth of conventional beliefs, however, strongly buttressed by almost universal acceptance and even law.[10]

Ibsen said later that he did not know what 'Women's Cause' was, but implied he was more interested in 'Mankind's Cause'. This was firmly demonstrated by Le Gallienne, who related how a great actress once thanked Ibsen for creating such good roles for women, to which he replied: "I have never created roles. I have written of human beings and human destinies".[11] However, he was familiar with Mill, Collett, and Hansteen; he even used Hansteen as the model for Lona Hessel in Samfundets Støtter, 1877, and in the winter of 1878 he was very outspoken in favor of equal rights for women in the Scandinavian club in Rome. Numerous people, writers, and the popular press, participated in the debate, so that, if not actively involved in the discussions, it is obvious that the general public was quite aware of the problems aired.

In the 1880s the Saedeligheds fejde merged into the Bohême fejde, the name deriving from Hans Jaeger's novel Fra Kristiania-Bohêmen, 1885. The ideology of the Bohême fejde was considerably more radical than that of the Saedeligheds fejde. Jaeger, a reactionary writer and a good friend of Munch, had been advocating since 1880 a new social philosophy and sexual reform. He felt that society itself could not be free until free love was permitted and that if marriage had to continue in

its present form, then prostitution must also be continued and indeed encouraged. He urged that prostitutes be treated with respect, and that couples, for whom marriage had become meaningless, be free to seek other sexual partners. The Bohême fejde in contrast to the Saedeligheds fejde was less concerned with women's rights but more with the broader inter-relations between members of both sexes and with their personal attitudes. The Bohême (Bohemian), as Moen suggests,[12] was not an organized movement but was centered around a few intellectuals, who, like Jaeger, were interested in the new European thoughts on morality, society, and the arts. They advocated freedom of speech, freedom of the arts, freedom for each individual to decide about his or her future, and freedom of his and her body. While valid, most of the ideas of the Bohême were rejected by the dominating middle class society because of the revolutionary manner in which they were introduced. The reception of Jaeger's novel is a good example. In 1885 this work caused a deep rift between the bourgeoisie and the intellectuals because of its explicit nature. In a similar fashion the play-wright Gunnar Heiberg, like Jaeger a member of the Kristiania Bohême, contributed to the sexual debate through plays such as Tante Ulrikke, 1883, and Balkonen, 1894. The latter, a short play, caused a public uproar when first performed because it exhibited "a double and quite unrepentant, lascivious adultress in a Norwegian drama".[13]

In retrospect, the 1890s were exceptional years in Norwegian cultural life. Naturalism which previously had been influencial in painting and literature lost its power and the younger generation began to react against it. We can certainly see this in the more

subjectively oriented situations we have in Obstfelder's and Munch's works. Zola's naturalistic doctrine evolved into a more psychological analysis with a narrower scope when the authors and artists began to turn inward, to concern themselves with primeval subject matter such as the meaning of life, death, and mankind's purpose in life. However, Obstfelder and Munch had taken note of Brandes' asking for open debate of current problems and of one of Jaeger's laws advanced in his "Bohêmebud",[14] namely, that one must write of one's own experiences, which he, incidently, had done in Fra Kristiania-Bohêmen. Obstfelder and Munch were well acquainted with both Heiberg and Jaeger, the leading active participants of the Bohême fejde; therefore, it is quite understandable if current ideas were assimilated, interpreted, and projected into their works. Obstfelder was actively discussing current topics, as shown by his responses to Christen Collin's attacks on morality, literature, and art in 1895 and 1896.[15] That he had been concerned with the ideas forwarded in the Saedeligheds fejde and the Bohême fejde is indeed evident by an earlier essay, "Diskussjon", 1887, published in Nylaende,[16] a periodical promoting women's viewpoints. In this article he expressed the view that small insignificant love affairs would do for the present but that he personally wanted to wait with the more overpowering and serious love until he himself was a fully matured and self-confident being. Although Obstfelder in his personal life had found little happiness in his quest for a happy and stable relationship with a woman, he was in his poems and prose continually interested in exploring and describing phases of relationships between man and woman. As Hannevik

points out, the article, "Diskussjon", shows that Obstfelder felt himself compelled to live a more enriched and spiritual life than his society advocated, and indicated that he was basically afraid of sexuality.[17] Subsequent analysis of selected works will show that Obstfelder had an ambivalent reaction to sexuality and women, but did not fear them. At the time of his nervous breakdown and during his recovery he felt that his mental illness was partly caused by his abstinence from sexual relationships. Obstfelder believed that the solution to his problems would be to marry and settle down in order to maintain his high ideals about his physical and spiritual cleanliness. This conflict of wanting to become completely involved with a woman, yet being afraid of what this relationship would entail, continued to plague Obstfelder throughout his life and indeed did culminate in his unhappy marriage.

While Obstfelder and Munch shared similar artistic ideologies, they were diametrically opposed in their lifestyles and personal relationships. Munch was involved emotionally and sexually with several women but he always shied away from lasting relationships. Possibly the unfortunate liaison with the wealthy Norwegian woman, fru Heiberg, as Munch called her, affected him so strongly that he abstained from permanent ties. Since he was closely associated for a period of his life with Stanislaw Przybyszewski and August Strindberg, who were outspoken in their derogatory opinions of the female sex, Munch has been construed as being a misogynist. Many of his more controversial paintings, which have stimulated widely diverging interpretations because of their complexity, are indeed depicting a woman, a couple, or a classic triangle. However, although several critics show the

negative connotations regarding Munch's male-female relationships, there is evidence to show that his depictions may be interpreted differently as will be demonstrated later.

Obstfelder and Munch, like Ibsen, were concerned with mankind as a whole, and were trying to analyze and depict the behavior of men and women. They were concerned with individuals, not with the masses or a social movement, and this is where they deviate from some of the views set forth by the women's emancipation movements in Norway. They may have used some of the contemporary social ideas, but used them artistically to explore in greater depth the interpersonal behavior of men and women.

Social and Artistic Contact

Oslo, or Kristiania, as it was called prior to 1924, was a small city with an intimate and select intellectual group of accepted and avant-garde writers and artists. Most of the spirited or soul-searching discussions took place at the University campus or at the Grand Hotel, and though there might have been opposing factions within the intellectual circle, everyone was acutely aware of his peers. While we do not have an abundance of documentation describing the direct interaction between Obstfelder and Munch during the last decades of the century, it is obvious that in such a small circle it would have been impossible for two artists of their stature to be unaware of each other and his works. We will show through the available information that contacts occurred and it will become apparent that each was familiar and genuinely concerned with the output of the other. Interestingly enough, while the material to be discussed was canvassed from extensive collections of letters to and from the two men, where mention of the other's name is often made, there is no evidence of correspondence having been exchanged between the two artists. This could possibly indicate that they were more at ease with each other when actually conversing rather than using letters to exchange views. Obstfelder gave a lecture and wrote an essay about Munch's paintings and Munch did several portraits of Obstfelder, so it is beyond doubt that they were well acquainted. They had many friends in common, Thiis, Krag, Jaeger, Heiberg and others, all of whom wrote about one or both artists.

The earliest documented references to Munch by

Obstfelder appear in two letters written in July, 1892,[18] one to his brother, Herman, and the other to Eugine Poulsen. In both he referred with pride to the fact that Munch had heard his poems and wanted to draw a vignette when they were to be published. We may conjecture that Munch became aware of these short sensitive poems through Thiis or Krag. That Obstfelder and Munch knew each other well is further supported by a letter to Thiis dated August 7, 1892,[19] where Obstfelder described his new location as being close to Aasgaardstrand where Munch lived. He also mentioned that he had not yet visited Munch. Thiis and Obstfelder had become friends in 1888 while students and it was, in all probability, Thiis and Krag who were the prime forces in stimulating and motivating Obstfelder in his literary venture. Thiis was also a good friend of Munch and supported him morally and economically by finding customers for his art. Thiis was to be the future director of the Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum in Trondhjem and later Nasjonalgalleriet in Oslo, thus becoming an extremely influencial person in Norwegian cultural life. When Munch had his one-man show in Oslo in 1889, Obstfelder was enrolled at Oslo's Technical School. While we have no documentation of Obstfelder's reactions to this exhibition it would have been most unlikely that he had not seen it, possibly even in Thiis' company, or had read and discussed the less than flattering reviews of the exhibition in the daily papers. Munch had his first Swedish exhibition in Stockholm in September,1894, at which time Obstfelder was in Stockholm writing and visiting friends. In a letter to his brother[20] Obstfelder mentioned that Munch was also present and that the paintings caused great interest. This letter further supports the supposition

that Obstfelder was interested in the pictorial arts in general and in Munch in particular, although he wrote to his brother more about music than the visual arts, since music was an interest the brothers shared. In a letter to his friend, Andreas Aubert, written in the fall of 1894, Obstfelder again referred to Munch's exhibition which "blev diskutteret i alle kredse, var taet besøgt, og var simpelthen dagens samtaleemne i lange tider".[21] In this letter he speculated on whether he should write a review of the Munch show for the Norwegian newspaper to which he often contributed. Indeed, as documented by a letter to another friend,[22] Obstfelder apparently reviewed the exhibition. However, the review was never published in this particular newspaper, probably because it was submitted after the exhibition had closed.

Further contact between Obstfelder and Munch occurred in Berlin where they associated with each other and numerous other avant-garde intellectuals. Obstfelder passed through Berlin from Stockholm on his way to Paris in 1894. He was in Berlin only for a few days and we have no evidence supporting that he met Munch at that time. But during Obstfelder's extensive visit to Berlin in the spring of 1895 he would have had many opportunities to get together with Thiis, visiting there at the same time, and Munch who at that time resided almost permanently in Berlin. This is the series of events that Thiis described in his book Edvard Munch og hans samtid[23] but which he unfortunately dated as happening in 1894, an error that has been repeated in much of the literature on Obstfelder, Munch, and others until Hannevik corrected it when he documented his research on Obstfelder.[24] That Obstfelder and Munch associated in Berlin in 1895 is further supported

by two letters written in March of that year. In the first one Obstfelder mentioned that he got together with "Munch, Thiis, Gallén, Paul, Vigeland"[25] in Berlin; in the second one, however, he may have been in one of his depressive moods, for he wrote:

> Her er jo Edvard Munch, Paul, Gallén, Vigeland, men jeg ser dem aldrig, de sidder paa kafeer og det kjeder mig og jeg har ikke raad....[26]

On November 9, 1895 at Studenter Samfundet (Students' Association) in Oslo Obstfelder gave a lecture on Munch and his art.[27] In the introduction to the lecture Obstfelder pointed out that he not only wanted to talk about Munch's art, but also wanted to use it as a starting point for a discussion about art in general. While Obstfelder had been familiar with Munch's paintings from personal contact and exhibitions in Oslo and Stockholm we might suggest that the extended Berlin visit gave them ample opportunity to meet and discuss their philosophies, indeed, Obstfelder could have used the occasion to collect material for the subsequent lecture. Johs. Roede, in his contribution to the book Edvard Munch som vi kjente ham. Vennerne fortaeller[28] referred to the events of the lecture. Although Roede did not actually become acquainted with Munch until 1904, he was first introduced to the artist and his work through Obstfelder's lecture. In his essay Roede reported that "Sigbjørn Obstfelder holdt det indledende foredrag, og han gikk med liv og sjel inn for sin dyrebare venn",[29] and further described the discussion that followed as being entangled with personal opinions and innuendos, all of which he found unprofessional and unscholarly. It is evident from both Roede's recollection and the official transcript of the meeting that most of the uproar was caused by Dr. Scharffenberg who expressed the personal and

professional opinions that

> ... der ligger tuberkulose og sinnsykdom til Munchs slekt, og at en maatte ha dette for øye, hvis en ville forstaa hans kunst.[30]

Roede further comments:

> Selvfølgelig var dette en drøy salve for et overfølsomt nervøst menneske som Edvard Munch, og jeg erinder at han var dødsens blek, da han sto lenet opp til en vegg og hørte paa. Det hele var sikkert en uhyggelig opplevelse for ham.[31]

Obstfelder later incorporated his lecture into an essay and had it published in Samtiden, 1896, entitled "Edvard Munch. Et Forsøg". A study of the minutes of the meeting as recorded by Oskar Grasmo shows that Obstfelder had not drastically altered his views on Munch when he rewrote the lecture for publication. However, in the essay Obstfelder left out the comparisons of Munch with Rubens and Böcklin, but kept the comparison with Rembrandt.

Obstfelder's essay is an attempt at analyzing some of Munch's works and the ideas behind them. It is a sensitive and deeply personal interpretation, but one that casts much light on Obstfelder, Munch, and the intellectual climate of the mid-1890s. In it Obstfelder wrote that Munch's art had changed from softer soulfilled statements to much stronger works, filled with contrasts. He felt, however, that Munch had not yet found what he was searching for in his art, but hoped that Munch would be able to produce the art for which he was destined. Munch's paintings, Obstfelder suggested, were characterized by an emphasis on, and a preoccupation with, mankind, and with man's reactions to other human beings and to life. Obstfelder was very receptive to Munch's art, since it accommodated his own thinking. He believed that any creative artist, regardless of his medium, is first and foremost an individual, a unique

person, and that the deeper aspects of life present meaningful subject matter for an artist. He pointed out that a portrait was not just a likeness of a person but a description of his soul.

Obstfelder emphasized Munch's usage of color, calling him "poet i farven" and "lyrikeren i farver".[32] According to him, Munch was unique in his interpretation of colors and their visual impact. Obstfelder looked at Munch's art critically, recognizing that its pervasive elements were Munch's strong individualistic aspects which caused him to disregard accepted or popular styles. Munch relied wholly on his inner need to represent themes and relied more on color than on line. Obstfelder did acknowledge that Munch used lines which were usually wavy as seen in hair, in the contours of land against the sea, and in the female body. Obstfelder compared Munch's lines and colors to rhythms in music; indeed, throughout the essay he often tied Munch's art to music and literature, endeavoring to correlate these art forms. Possibly he felt, through his extensive knowledge and instinctive understanding of music and literature, that similar tendencies were here expressed on canvas. Obstfelder's analysis of Munch's art was very close to what he himself was involved in or attempted to do. Obstfelder, for example, referred to Munch's Madonna and said:

> Det er kvinden som den, der i sin livmoder baerer jordens største under, Munch ser. Han kommer atter og atter tilbage hertil. Han søger at fremstille i al sin gru det øieblik, da følelsen deraf vaagner hos hende selv, han maler den kolde, sorte skygge sterkt paa vaeggen forat saette os levende ind i det.[33]

This is a very interesting interpretation of Madonna which most writers and scholars have described as depicting the moment of conception or the moment where

woman is experiencing the joy of orgasm. Obstfelder here established a direct correlation to his own prose work Bugen (The Belly) which will be examined in more detail later on. Hannevik noted that Obstfelder found religious attitudes in Munch and in his works, particularly with regard to Munch's views of women and the origins of life.[34] The basis for this conclusion is the following paragraph from Obstfelder's essay:

> For mig er hans Madonnabillede indbegrebet af hans kunst. Det er jordens Madonna, kvinden, som føder i smerte. Jeg tror, man maa gaa til russisk litteratur for at gjenfinde en saa religiøs opfatning af kvinden, en saadan forherligelse af smertens skjønhed. Det som ligger paa bunden af livet er ikke klart for vore øine, hverken i form, farve eller idé. Livblivelsen har omhyllet sig med en hemmelighedsfuld deilighed og skraek, som ikke ti menneskelige sanser vilde kunne definere, men som en stor lyriker kan be til. Laengselen efter at haeve det menneskelige ud og op, forstørre paany det, som vort daglige straev har formindsket, vise det i sin oprindelige gaadefuldhed, den naar her sit høieste og blir religiøsitet.[35]

However, Obstfelder did not appear to have a recognized conventional religion in mind but rather showed his interest and concern in the lives and life cycles of human beings.

Obstfelder maintained that Munch began to paint in an Impressionistic fashion and was still partly an Impressionistic painter up to 1896 when the essay was published. Impressionism here was used by Obstfelder not purely as a style but more as a means of selecting subject matter because he continued by talking about Jaeger's ideology and his impact on Munch's oeuvre. In retrospect, Munch's subject matter was actually either Post-impressionistic or Expressionistic rather than Impressionistic. Even though Obstfelder admired Munch's works he realized that Munch was not yet a

fully mature artist. While Obstfelder mentioned various stylistic aspects such as color, line, composition, subject matter, and style, he was more interested in the underlying themes of Munch's production. Obstfelder wrote about Munch's art in general, referring to only a few specific works, so the viewer himself had to apply the themes discussed in the essay to particular paintings.

It would be interesting to know how much, if, indeed, any, of the lecture and subsequent essay was the outcome of joint work by Munch and Obstfelder. As mentioned previously they had had ample opportunity for discussions while in Berlin. In October of 1895, just before the lecture when Munch was back in Oslo organizing and hanging a collection of recent works, they would again have been able to discuss in detail specific works as well as the pervasive ideologies present in their respective artforms. If such conversations actually took place we might further conjecture that Munch, in general, approved of the opinions and interpretations forwarded by Obstfelder in the lecture and the essay. However, no documentation specifically supporting the above has yet come to light.

The extensive collection of letters in the Munch Museum contains correspondence between Munch and a variety of people including his aunt, Karen Bjølstad, and his sister, Inger, both of whom had been careful in keeping his letters. As mentioned previously there is no evidence of letters being exchanged between Obstfelder and Munch, although there are several letters to Munch from Herman Obstfelder written after Sigbjørn's death. As was the case with the Obstfelder correspondence alluding to Munch, the Munch letters referred frequently to Obstfelder.

The collection also contains some letters written by Vilhelm Krag in July, 1892. Krag was then staying in Bergen with John Grieg who had published Krag's poems with Munch's title vignette. Krag's collection of poems predated the publication of Obstfelder's poems, but Krag by that time had read Obstfelder's poems primarily from the small manuscript "Tannhauser-marschen" that Obstfelder, prior to his leaving for the United States, had given Thiis.[36] Krag, in his letter,[37] encouraged Munch to have an exhibition in Bergen and submitted practical suggestions and offers of help. In another undated letter probably written in the middle of July Krag had a postscript saying: "Har Obstfälder [sic] vaeret hos dig?".[38] This letter and the letter from Obstfelder to Thiis where he said that he had not yet visited Munch in Aasgaardstrand, further lend support to their close affiliation. Neither Krag nor Obstfelder mentioned the purpose of Obstfelder's visit. But we might assume that Krag, who along with Thiis, had suggested, urged, and arranged for the publication of Obstfelder's poems by Grieg, had designed that Munch should draw a vignette for the volume. Obstfelder himself mentioned in letters that Munch had heard his poems and had offered to do a vignette.[39] Maybe it had been left up to Obstfelder to see Munch and pursue or finalize the matter. According to Trygve Nergaard, Munch in the early 1890s was quite interested in what was going on at Grieg's publishing house in Bergen.[40] We know that this interest in the rapport between literature and the visual arts remained with Munch, if we consider his illustrations of works by Goldstein, Przybyszewski, Baudelaire, Strindberg, and Ibsen, and of course his own literary and pictorial creation Alpha and Omega.

Munch's letters indicate that he was in Stockholm during late September and early October, 1894 when his exhibit opened at Konstföreningens Lokal. We have established that Obstfelder was there, but neither mentioned in letters that they actually met, although they were associating with some of the same people in Stockholm. Munch in his letter to his aunt of October 24, 1894 wrote concerning the show in Stockholm:

> Jeg traf mange hyggelige folk - Grev Prozor, som oversaetter Ibsens arbeider i Paris inviterede mig paa en flot middag sammen med Lugné-Pöe....[41]

Obstfelder also wrote about Lugné-Pöe in a letter to his brother postmarked Stockholm, October 1894:

> ...Lugné-Pöe, som i det sidste har fremført flere norske skuespil, isaer af Ibsen, var her og spillede Rosmersholm, jeg likte det ikke, - det faldt ogsaa igjennem baade i Kr.a. og i Kjøbenhavn. Derimod Maeterlinck-soiren var mer faengslende. Lugné-Pöe er egentlig amerikaner, og skal stamme fra Edgar Pöe, hvorfor han har tillagt sig Pöe-navnet, saa meget mere som Pöe jo nu er en af symbolismens halvguder. Den norske maler Edvard Munch har ogsaa vaeret her, og hans kunst-revolutionaere malerier har vaeret meget diskuterede her i alle kredse.[42]

Munch and Obstfelder, as previously mentioned, met in Berlin. Munch wrote his sister, Inger, in December 1894 from Berlin saying that he was expecting Thiis and Obstfelder.[43] He did not have to explain who they were since Inger would have known them as her brother's friends from Oslo. Indeed, in a letter written to Munch in December 1940,[44] she reminisced about a visit to their home by Obstfelder when she had to give up her bed to him. This would establish that Munch and Obstfelder were close friends, and we may conclude that they had been friends for a number of years, and were well enough acquainted to visit each other and each other's families. Another reference to Obstfelder

and Thiis and their close association with Munch is inferred through Dagny Juell, Przybyszewski's wife. In an undated letter[45] to Munch from Berlin written shortly after the publication of Overbord, in which a painter is the protagonist, she wrote to alleviate Munch's fears by declaring that the painter was certainly not modelled after him, as gossip indicated. Significantly enough, she added, that he could have heard this gossip only through Obstfelder or Thiis, since at that time Przybyszewski's novel had only been published in Danish.

To further substantiate that Obstfelder's and Munch's relationship was not a casual one we can cite a postcard to Munch from Helge Rode, a close friend of both, postmarked Nordstrand 26.X.1895, in which he invited Munch to dinner and mentioned that Obstfelder was also expected.[46] Although we found nothing in the Obstfelder correspondence supporting that he associated with Munch while they were both in Paris in 1895 and 1896, we do know that several of the Obstfelder portraits were executed there and in one of Munch's Paris letters to Inger, he wrote

> ... jeg er sammen med Obstfelder om dagen og af og til med Strindberg, der nu er noksaa gammel...[47]

Munch and Obstfelder along with other Norwegians enjoyed on many occasions the gracious hospitality of the Lie family, who lived in Paris. We have consulted several invitations to Munch from either Jonas Lie or Erik Lie dated 1889, 1890, 1896 and 1897, when Munch was in Paris.[48] In a letter to Munch from Dr. Max Linde, Munch's most important early supporter, Obstfelder's name was mentioned again. The letter is dated Lübeck, August 20, 1903, therefore written after Obstfelder's death.[49]

> ... Ich danke Ihnen für den Aufsatz von Obstfelder. Er ist sehr gut geschreiben. Ich zeigte ihn Heilblut, der gerade hier was ... Ich darf den Aufsatz von Obstfelder wohl noch einige Zeit behalten. Gebe ihn später zurück...

The Berlin periodical, Pan,[50] printed Obstfelder's novellette Liv, and Munch's etching of Hamsun, in 1895 and 1896 respectively. We do not know if Obstfelder owned any of Munch's works but Munch had in his library, now housed in the Munch Museum in Oslo, four volumes of Obstfelder's writings, one volume with a dedication in Obstfelder's handwriting.[51]

In light of the above documentary evidence it is established that Obstfelder and Munch were associated for extended periods in Berlin, Paris, and of course in their native Norway. In addition, they had a number of friends in common, so it is safe to conclude that they would have been well acquainted with each other and with each other's works, and that they were interested in each other, indeed, to the degree that Obstfelder gave a public lecture on Munch's art, later published. It cannot be established that either directly influenced any works of the other. But we will demonstrate that they shared similar attitudes which they expressed in their respective media.

Critical Assessment

Obstfelder and Munch have been studied and analyzed by many scholars and critics who have diversely interpreted and evaluated the two artists. For the purpose of this study we have deemed it important to examine pertinent literature in the hope of determining how scholars have analyzed Obstfelder's and Munch's viewpoints on man and woman, individually and together, and how these were expressed through their art. Obstfelder and his writings have not been studied by scholars as extensively and as intensively as have Munch and his works, possibly because Munch's paintings not only had been deemed more controversial in nature, but also had been publicly exhibited from the moment of completion. Obstfelder's works never did enjoy the same public exposure, nor did the public and the critics label his writings as provocative. While articles and essays pertaining to Obstfelder exist from the 1890s and onwards, few of them showed professional analysis of the works and insight into the writer.[52] It was not until 1959 and 1960 that interest in Obstfelder was great enough to produce two monographs on him. While these two books created a better understanding of Obstfelder and his writings, the bulk of his works remains ignored or, at best, inadequately analyzed.

Sigbjørn Obstfelder

The better study of Obstfelder to date, Hannevik's Obstfelder og Mystikken, 1960,[53] a well documented and thoroughly researched study, takes a religious-psychological approach to Obstfelder's works.[54] Hannevik points out that Obstfelder's writings from

the middle 1890s are concerned with love and women, not with an individual woman but with a generalized female who embodies certain of Obstfelder's concepts of womanhood and love. The love emphasized is a harmonious love, spiritual rather than corporeal. In the later part of the 1890s Obstfelder is more concerned with religious theories in, for example, De røde draaber and in the unfinished En praests dagbog, which are important for Hannevik's approach. As these two works do not apply to the present study of Obstfelder they will not be discussed here. Korset,[55] Obstfelder's most popular work, is called, by Hannevik, the least sophisticated of his writings, because of its simplistic plot structure.[56] While Hannevik dismisses Korset since it does not contribute to his religious-psychological approach to Obstfelder, he does classify it as psychologically oriented, describing a man's version of a relationship involving jealousy, a woman's past, and a man who never questioned his own actions.

Hannevik further points out that, while the story is quite straightforward, its strength comes from the moving formulation, the careful choice of words, and the short sentences used. Indeed, many critics are aware of Obstfelder's innovative style. Hannevik notes that almost all of Obstfelder's works were written in the first-person singular, called jeg-formen in Norwegian, which might indicate that "I" is the author himself. This is not always the case with Obstfelder as was explained in his essay "Jeg-formen i litteraturen"[57] where Obstfelder stated that he attempted by means of jeg-formen to get as close to the reader as possible. We may also observe that writings in jeg-formen lend themselves to being interpreted as

autobiographical. Hannevik notes that during the 1890s the tendency had shifted from a realistically oriented literature, like Naturalism, to a literature where the psychological, the subconscious, Unterbewusstsein, and the inexplicable were of primary importance. He postulates that Obstfelder's personal indecisiveness manifested itself in his characters and had its roots in the artistic and cultural climate of the decade.

The other monograph, Bjørnsen's Sigbjørn Obstfelder. Mennesket, poeten og grubleren, 1959,[58] appearing one year prior to Hannevik's, was the first major attempt of forwarding a chronological and comprehensive account of Obstfelder. Bjørnsen, rather than presenting specific hypotheses as did Hannevik, is more interested in showing parallels between the personal life of Obstfelder and the themes of his works. Bjørnsen disagrees with earlier critics in that he postulates that the nervous breakdown suffered by Obstfelder could not really have influenced his writings. He maintains that the seeds were already there during Obstfelder's childhood and early youth which is supported by citing specific examples. While the author is primarily interested in Obstfelder and his writings, he has attempted to fit him into the artistic milieu of Oslo but does so by stating only known facts without drawing any conclusions from this material. With regard to our study Bjørnsen points out that Obstfelder, as a student at the gymnasium, was interested in current topics, among them sexuality, on which he spoke and wrote. In response to a lecture to the students in which a speaker expressed his ideas of sexual abstinence during the period of adolescent development and of sexual moderation during maturation, he reports that Obstfelder replied that abstinence was

directly detrimental; one could not set down firm guidelines but had to examine each case individually. Obstfelder believed that his generation's sexdrives were not strong and it would be better to strengthen rather than suppress them.[59] Bjørnsen correctly observes that these opinions are quite different from the ones forwarded later in Obstfelder's "Diskussjon" in Nylaende, 1887.[60] This essay, which we mentioned previously, is discussed by a number of Obstfelder scholars.[61] While Bjørnsen does not devote much analysis to the essay, Hannevik suggests that it was inspired and influenced by the debate on sexuality, a popular subject in the 1880s, and he postulates that the contents of the essay showed Obstfelder was self-ordained to live a richer and better life. Hannevik further stresses that the writer was afraid of sexuality[62] and that this fear often appeared in his work, sometimes combined with a fear of death, as if death and sexuality were inseparable partners.[63] Nilsson also alludes to Obstfelder's fear of physical love and points to his fantasies about a dream woman in his works, an observation with which Beyer[64] and Burchardt[65] agree. Nilsson compares Obstfelder's Liv with Munch's Syk Pike as he speculates, without arriving at a conclusion, if one artist influenced the other's work. Nilsson feels that the character Liv was "drömmen om det fullkomligt rene, obefläckade, hon är madonnan, hennes tankar sveper sig som en ren klädnar kring den pinade mannen".[66] He evaluates Korset and finds it concerned with the man's problems only, which corresponds to Hannevik's views. Brodwall, a medical doctor, in his article "Sigbjørn Obstfelder. Digtning - personlighet og psykose", 1948,[67] is interested in examining Obstfelder's literary output,

having first diagnosed the illness that he believes caused Obstfelder's nervous breakdown. Brodwall further points out that

> Det er bemerkelsesverdig at Obstfelder med sine kvinneskikkelser ikke søker aa gjengi det utpreget feminine; det er det i egentligste forstand menneskelige - uavhengig av kjønnet - som opptar ham.[68]

This statement supports the approach taken in our study. Brodwall feels that Obstfelder's attitude toward the erotic is ambiguous, and that he always used fantasy and dreams to enhance love as exemplified by his male characters. For example, Brodwall points to Korset where Rebecca was depicted by the narrator by means of a fantasy picture of how she was before they met[69] and this created image becomes more important than the real one. It is common for schiziophrenic persons, Dr. Brodwall states, to create a fantasy mistress or lover, thus giving us a medical opinion supporting what lay critics have already suggested. Brodwall feels, however, that this tendency was not caused by the psychological condition alone but was merely accentuated by it, and that it probably exists in "mennesker med overveiende introvertet sjelsvirksomhet",[70] which is how he characterizes Obstfelder.

Winsnes, in Norges Litteratur, 1961,[71] writes a perceptive summary of Obstfelder emphasizing the profundity of his writings. He singles out two main motifs in the erotic writings, one is concerned with woman as "det elementaere naturvaesen", the other is concerned with the erotic soul mysticism, where the erotic experience is the road to the deepest understanding of life.[72] It is interesting to note how many scholars have commented on Obstfelder's female characters and have tried through them to characterize Obstfelder's own attitudes to women. Many of these

attempts are just that, attempts, and quite often the critics feel that their tasks have been completed after enumerating a number of qualities attributed to Obstfelder's female characters without substantiating or elaborating on these observations. However, since these writings are part of the scanty literature on Obstfelder, they will be mentioned here, but obviously cannot be properly substantiated as the original scholars did not advance proof. In his article from 1921, Bergendahl[73] describes Obstfelder's concept of woman as being she that gives life, she that is cosmos, she that is closest to the eternal question, and she that is instrumental in leading the way from earthly to divine life.[74] In articles dated 1918 and 1919 respectively, Berggrav[75] and Claussen[76] disagree about the interpretation of woman in Obstfelder's works. Berggrav feels Obstfelder was interested in the sensual woman,[77] while Claussen contends that the emphasis was primarily on woman as the mother figure. A few years later, in 1921, Claussen[78] returns to this topic and reinforces his former view on the mother figure. Other important themes in Obstfelder's oeuvre, according to Claussen, are the attempts to explore the inexplicable in life, the secrets in life. Mortensen[79] stresses Obstfelder's sensitivity, his partiality toward love and beauty and alludes to his desire for, and fear of, sensual love, which we have already touched on. Mortensen further observes:

> Taenkeren, grubleren, vandreren, som ser og ser, tumler med livsgaader og grunder, gransker, mediterer sig frem til livets mening. Men det centrale er Eros, eller rettere kvinden, den jordiske - overjordiske, livets ophav og maal, gudens og menneskets mor. Saa højt rangerer kvinden hos Obstfelder.[80]

Hansteen[81] agrees with Mortensen as to the erotic elements and the glorification of women in Obstfelder's production.

Claussen in Sigbjørn Obstfelder. I hans digtning og breve, 1924,[82] comments on Obstfelder's idealistic and shy male characters and perceptively concludes that most of the individuals, male and female, presented in the works are characterized by the fact that they never become close, never get to know each other, which is indeed true. Lund[83] in his unpublished manuscript states that Obstfelder believed in love and beauty, which for him are personified by woman. He could admire woman, but he found physical love difficult, showing a split between his ideas and his instinctive drives,[84] being unable to reconcile this duality. Lund further says that the feminine was strong in Obstfelder's emotional life which is why he praised women so highly. Lund does not support this intricate postulation but continues by stating that Obstfelder, during his illness, believed himself to be a woman,[85] again, not indicating supporting evidence for this diagnosis.

Edvard Munch

While the literature on Obstfelder is sparse with the better works published nearly 60 years after his death, the literature on Munch is extensive having appeared immediately upon his works being produced and continuing to the present time. While the quality of it varies, as with the Obstfelder literature, the general level of studies is higher. The evaluation and interpretation of Munch's pictorial images began early in his lifetime and some studies have enjoyed popularity among scholars up to the present. This is

the case with the first published volume dedicated to analyzing Munch's art which was Das Werk des Edvard Munch, 1894.[86] This short book was edited by Przybyszewski who also contributed an essay along with Pastor, Servaes, and Meier-Graefe. They were associated with the Berlin group, Zum schwarzen Ferkel, frequented by Munch early in the 1890s. Przybyszewski felt that a spiritual bond existed between Munch and himself. A careful evaluation of his analysis and interpretation of Munch's art shows that it is a very subjective essay closely tied to his own opinions and philosophy which were tainted by his misogyny. In his opinion, Munch is "der Maler des psychischen Gestaltungsdranges von Gefühlsimpulsen, der Maler des psychischen Überschwanges"[87] and Servaes' views follow similar lines. While weak in parts, this publication is important because it was published at the beginning of Munch's career. It presents an early report of the interpretations and philosophies advanced in the group around Munch. Das Werk has been extensively used by later students of Munch, who still disagree about how much Munch personally contributed to the information, and whether or not he in fact did agree with the interpretations put forth in the four essays.

Dedekam, in Edvard Munch, 1909,[88] believes that Obstfelder was the first person who called Munch's art "sjaelemaleri" (soul painting) in his lecture and essay of 1895/96. Dedekam finds three motifs central to Munch's art, love, illness, and death, and suggests that most of Munch's depictions of these three powers of life are autobiographical. His interpretations of such key works as Madonna, Vampyr, Aske, and I Mannens Hjerne follow closely those of Przybyszewski and Strindberg, who believe that woman is the enemy of

creative man, using her sexual drives to destroy man although she, through sexual union, secures life for coming generations. This was one of the earliest monographs on Munch which attempted to tie him in with contemporary art.

Thiis' Edvard Munch og hans samtid, 1933,[89] is invaluable in its description of the 1880s and the insight it gives into Munch's life as reported by his longtime friend. Since Thiis was not only a friend but also a supporter, it was difficult for him to be completely objective. There are also irregularities concerning dates because Thiis relied to a great extent on his own and on Munch's recollections. Thiis, along with Benesch,[90] Lathe,[91] and I. Langaard,[92] emphasize that Munch had formulated his views of women before he met Strindberg in Berlin. Thiis, I. Langaard, and Lathe feel, however, that while they did not necessarily have identical viewpoints, Strindberg and Munch did exchange ideas about women and love and thus influenced each other. Benesch says that woman for Strindberg and Munch is neither entirely good nor entirely evil.[93] Lathe perceptively points out that Strindberg's and Munch's views on women must have differed since Strindberg, in Inferno, referred to Munch as "women worshipping",[94] while on the occasion of the 1896 Munch exhibition in Paris, in La Revue Blanche[95] he arrived at conclusions which are closer to his own negative views of women.

The majority of the scholars, such as Moen,[96] Askeland,[97] Svenaeus,[98] and Nergaard,[99] follow Sarvig, who, in Edvard Munchs grafik,[100] states that

> Eros og døden hører ubrydeligt sammen for Munch. Eros er den død, som avler liv, avler al lidelse, skaber al glaede, som atter avler lidelse.[101]

In addition he says that Munch looked at the most

elementary in life, while Pola Gauguin in his article "Mennesket Edvard Munch" expresses similar sentiments when he notes that man's natural instincts always come forth even if they are at odds with the prevailing morality.[102] He further observes that the relationship between man and woman often consists of a combat where the rules are those given by the moral mores and the inherent physical and psychological instincts. Starting with this view, he evaluates man's and woman's respective strengths; woman is weak because of the penalty she will pay upon deviating from the mores, and man is weak physically and psychologically because he has greater sexual needs than a woman. Gauguin's statements, which incidentally also touch on birth and mother instinct, were closely related to issues which involved the Bohême movement in the 1880s. Bang in Edvard Munch og Jappe Nilssen, 1946,[103] points out that Munch's art was always referring to death, sadness, and suffering with no relief being gained from love; indeed, woman is the source of all sorrow. She postulates that Munch agreed with Strindberg's philosophies in regard to woman, therefore disagreeing with Lathe. According to her, Munch believed:

> Kvinden er skapt til mandens fordaerv og at mand og kvinde altid maa komme til at staa overfor hinanden som fiender. Men i kampen blir det altid manden, der ligger under, fordi han ikke andre vaaben har til at møte kvindens traeskhet med en sin lojalitet og sin ridderlighed.[104]

Stenersen's book, Edvard Munch. Naerbilde av et geni,[105] published in 1944 shortly after Munch's death, is based primarily on personal encounters between Munch and Stenersen. The author's interpretations of and comments on Munch's works are useful although he does not distinguish between his own interpretations and his information from Munch. This book has been

used extensively as one of the basic sources for studies by, for example, Foy,[106] Digby,[107] Steinberg and Weiss.[108] These Jungian and Freudian interpretations of Munch's art and personal life are predicated mainly upon the authors' common belief that Munch experienced a tremendous and longlasting trauma upon the death of his mother. For example, Steinberg and Weiss feel that Munch's "conception that closeness between a man and a woman is dangerous"[109] stemmed from his conscious "introjection"[110] of his mother. Stenersen's account, however, should not be completely discounted but should, like Heller suggests,[111] be used with caution, and checked against other unrelated sources so as not to get statements such as women with "nutcracker muscles"[112] repeated in the literature.[113] This is one volume which, along with Strindberg's and Przybyszewski's opinions, clearly established a convincing myth concerning Munch's onesided negative view of woman.

Deknatel,[114] showing a good understanding of the Saedeligheds Fejde, believes that Munch was more influenced by the Kristiania Bohême, and that Munch's interest in sexual problems began in the eighties. Deknatel states that Munch's increased concern with "themes of the relations of the sexes"[115] during the years 1906 and 1907 corresponds to the artist's personal tensions of that time. In actual fact, as will be demonstrated later, Munch was really returning to these themes which he had posed and explored to some depth in the 1890s, a claim also made by Greve in Edvard Munch. Liv og Verk i lys av Tresnittene, 1963.[116] Disassociating herself from narrowminded and traditional interpretations, Greve proposes a refreshing interpretation of Munch's attitude to woman. She praises his understanding of a woman's psyche, but

states that Munch knew everything and yet nothing about love.[117] She believes that he projected himself into a woman's psyche intuitively, since she calls Elskende Kvinde "mer enn en innforlivelse - den er geniets mysteriøse identifisering".[118] Greve also points out that Munch did not follow contemporary artistic expressions or styles before 1900, but created works associated with "drifternes blinde ekstase".[119]

Hodin[120] emphasizes that Munch's contemporary society was in turmoil and that often his generation turned its hate against itself, or blamed woman, who was the one in whom life originated. While Hodin refers to the fraction of creative contemporary people who viewed woman as a negative and destructive force, noting that there are paintings by Munch expressing hate for the female species, he suggests that Munch's complete oeuvre shows that Munch was able to arrive at a viable personal solution to the hatred and destructiveness existing between man and woman. Timm[121] points out that Munch was intellectually involved in the discussions of woman's place and role in society and that he was emotionally and sexually stimulated by women. Munch's depictions, he continues, almost always oscillated between good and evil, love and death, harmony and destruction.[122] His art was primarily depicting life as an ongoing process, acknowledging that happiness and sorrow would intrude. Timm comes to the conclusion that "Munch's relations to woman is marked by a deep dualism of longing and fear"[123] and that "woman to him remained a strange being, good or wicked, but always a puzzle".[124] A similar sentiment is voiced by Sarvig who states:

> I portraetterne ser man ham [Munch] søge hende [kvinden] som menneske og derpaa ofte studse ved hende som køn. Eller han kan naerme sig hende

som køn og forundres ved hende som menneske.[125]

Moen, in Edvard Munch. Kvinnen og Eros, 1957,[126] proposes that Munch lived a double existence, having been brought up in a conventional environment and later exposed to and involved in the Kristiania Bohême:

> Han blev en Bohém med puritanske motforestillinger, og disse sterke motsetningene i hans sinn førte en stadig kamp om overtaket. Kanskje finner vi her aarsakene til heftigheten og uttrykkskraften i hans bilde. Di hadde jo blant annet til opgave aa overbevise ham selv![127]

Moen adds that many of Munch's women were seen "med elskerens subjective lidenskap, hat, sjalusi og fortvivelse",[128] and that Munch described the relationship between man and woman as comprising diametrically opposed forces driving them apart. Death and destruction are also implied in his works. Moen feels that the themes chosen by Munch suggest periodic impotency in the artist,[129] an interesting but uncorroborated argument. Moen correctly points out that Munch often chose to depict the negative aspects of women, noting with interest that Munch could be so objective in his female portraits while, at the same time having "en privatfilosofi der kvinnen baade var fremstilt som vampyr og hetaere".[130]

I. Langaard[131] presents an interesting account of Munch's paintings and graphic production up to the turn of the century. She discusses the social and artistic climates in Scandinavia, Germany, and France and their impact on Munch's works, but rarely presents her own opinions regarding Munch's artistic themes. Instead she relies primarily on the essays in Das Werk. Svenaeus, in the late 1960s and early 1970s,[132] proposes new interpretations of Munch, but since he has not dealt specifically with the relationship of man and woman his publications fall beyond the scope of the

present study.

Obstfelder and Munch

Many scholars[133] in mentioning the congruity of Obstfelder's and Munch's arts have noted that they shared similar concerns expressed in words or paint. Stenersen reminisced that "jeg har hørt ham si at Obstfelders dikt hadde gitt ham stoff til flere bilder".[134]

Many Obstfelder and Munch scholars, among them Bjørnsen and Dedekam, have suggested that the works of the two men have strong autobiographical tendencies, which would be quite understandable in view of the artistic climate that encouraged the creative intellectuals to rely extensively on the psychological and the subconscious. These same two critics and others have commented that Obstfelder and Munch were men of their time, closely in touch with the artistic movements, a fact established in the beginning of this study.

The literature on Munch clearly shows that far too many studies have been based on the subjective opinions forwarded originally by Przybyszewski and Strindberg so that many of the interpretations encountered are preconceived or stereotyped. Another pitfall of Munch scholars has been an overreliance on titles for interpretations instead of studying the works themselves. At times, Moen, I. Langaard, and others rely extensively on titles to propose interpretations of works; however, we would suggest that scholars should be extremely cautious and not depend solely on this method when studying Munch's works, because he frequently conceived or finished paintings without particular themes in mind, paintings were often retitled, and in some cases he left the titling to others.[135] The Obstfelder literature has

not suffered from similar errors, but the scholars of his works all too frequently propose interpretations without providing the evidence upon which these are based, as were the cases with Lund and Bergendahl noted previously.

Several of the scholars reviewed above, such as Brodwall and Sarvig, have pointed out that, in their art, Obstfelder and Munch were motivated by basic concerns of mankind so that their art explored love, happiness, sadness, suffering, hate, or death, or, as so aptly put by Benesch, "the deepest problems of human existence".[136] Many scholars whose writings we have examined have noted the two artists' interest in the theme of man-woman relationships, and their interest in the duality of love and hate as being inherent in such relationships, frequently destroying the happiness originally sought by the couple. Several Munch scholars, including Dedekam and I. Langaard, relying primarily on Przybyszewski's and Strindberg's opinions, have viewed woman as a destructive and man-devouring force, one that used sex as a means to gain control over the male. However, such interpretations would imply the presence of either a non-assertive or passive male, something that critics have not commented on. Obstfelder's male characters have been described as passive by Claussen and others. This passivity would imply that, while Obstfelder's men desire women and love, few relationships ever materialize and those that do rarely become stable, an observation made by most Obstfelder scholars. In addition, the literature on Obstfelder and Munch has emphatically stressed the importance of woman for the two artists. Munch's depictions of women are interpreted by almost everyone, Greve excluded, as negative, while Obstfelder's female characters are interpreted in

a more positive light throughout the critical literature. Although we know that Munch had several unhappy relationships with women and has been construed as a misogynist in view of the interpretations forwarded on his paintings, critics have ignored that he had a warm relationship with the violinist, Eva Mudocci. His own words to her are illuminating:

> Der findes sjaelden i Norwegen [sic] dette skjøne Forhold mellen mand og kvinde hvilket er halvt syndigt og halvt helligt.[137]

Interpretations favorable to Obstfelder's view on women, as evidenced by Claussen's articles, have concentrated on his use of the mother image, the fountain of life. Such scholars as Winsnes, Berggrav, and Mortensen are divided on their interpretations and describe his female characters as portraying either metaphysical or sensual aspects. Critics, including Hannevik and Brodwall, who in their works refer to Obstfelder's depictions of a sensual woman, maintain that she is not a destructive being, as is Munch's sensual woman, but she is that which Obstfelder's male is longing for, but afraid of. Brodwall suggests that this fear of woman is predicated on the uncertainty of a fulfilled relationship, while Hannevik postulates that Obstfelder had a fear of sex which manifested itself in his works. Most critics agree with Hannevik and Nilsson that Obstfelder and his male protagonists are able to cope more adequately with spiritual rather than corporeal love.

The above scholars have continually inferred that Obstfelder and Munch consistently showed genuine concern for mankind by intuitively understanding man's and woman's psyche. If we carefully examine their works, disregarding the stereotyped interpretations that exist, we will be able to reach a better under-

standing of how they actually depicted the relationship between man and woman in their writings and paintings.

Footnotes

Part I

All translations are by this author, translated for the first time from the original languages.

[1] José Ortega y Gasset, Velazquez, Goya and The Dehumanization of Art (New York: Norton, 1972), p. 14.

[2] J.W. McFarlane, Ibsen and the Temper of Norwegian Literature (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960), pp. 105-106.

[3] Johan Faltin Bjørnsen, Sigbjørn Obstfelder. Mennesket, poeten og grubleren (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1959), p. 131.

[4] Edvard Beyer, ed., Norges Litteratur Historie (Oslo: Cappelens, 1975), IV, p. 111.
"the first modernist in Nordic literature".

[5] Sigbjørn Obstfelder, Samlede Skrifter (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1950), III, "Edvard Munch. Et Forsøg", pp. 283-292.

[6] Ibid., "Gustav Vigeland", pp. 273-278.

[7] Mc Farlane, p. 111.

[8] Werner Haftmann, Painting in the Twentieth Century (New York: Praeger, 1968), I, p. 58.

[9] Beyer, III, p. 19. Anna Caspari Agerholt says in Den norske Kvinnefrigjøringen historie that the literature from ca. 1875 to 1890 had advanced the women's cause considerably.

[10] Brian W. Downs, Modern Norwegian Literature 1860-1918 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1966), p. 61.

[11] Eva Le Gallienne in Henrik Ibsen's The Wild Duck and other Plays (New York: The Modern Library, 1961), p. xiii.

[12] Arve Moen, Edvard Munch. Samtid og Miljø (Oslo: Norsk Kunstreproduksjon, 1956), p. 20.

[13] Downs, p. 144.

[14] Henrik Jaeger, "Bohêmebud", Impressionisten, No. 8, Feb. (1889) last page.

[15] Samlede Skrifter, III, "Et svar", pp. 257-267 and "Hvor er mandated?", pp. 267-273.

[16] Ibid., "Diskussjon", pp. 277-284.

[17] Arne Hannevik, Obstfelder og Mystikken (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1960), p. 36.

[18] Sigbjørn Obstfelder, Breve til hans Bror (Stavanger: Stabenfeldt Forlag, 1949), letter to Herman Obstfelder, p. 144.
Arne Hannevik, Brev fra Sigbjørn Obstfelder (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1966), letter to Eugine Poulsen, pp. 63-64.

[19] Hannevik, Brev, p. 64.

[20] Obstfelder, Breve, p. 191.

[21] Ibid., p. 104.
"was discussed in all circles, was much visited and was simply the daily topic of conversations for the longest time".

[22] Ibid., p. 113.

[23] Jens Thiis, Edvard Munch og hans samtid (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1933), pp. 207-222.

[24] Hannevik, Obstfelder, note 25, pp. 277-278. Hannevik gives a very short resume of Obstfelder's life and corrects some errors which had occurred in Bjørnsen's book. A significant error affecting the dating of the works of Munch, Vigeland, and Obstfelder was originally made by Thiis. Thiis in Edvard Munch og hans samtid stated that Obstfelder and Munch (and Vigeland) were in Berlin in 1894 and spent much time together. However, Obstfelder was only there for two days. His longer stay in Berlin, a couple of months, was in 1895. He had left Stockholm in February and had travelled via Copenhagen to Berlin. It was then, during his second stay in Berlin that Obstfelder associated not only with Thiis, but also with Munch, Gallén, and Vigeland.

[25] Hannevik, Brev, letter to Frk. Key, p. 118.

[26] Ibid., letter to Lundgaard og frue, p. 120. "here are Edvard Munch, Paul, Gallén, Vigeland but I never see them, they frequent the cafés and that bores me, and I haven't the money...".

[27] The original transcript of the minutes of the meeting is in the Munch Museum, Oslo. The lecture was later rewritten and published in Samtiden, 1896 and the text of the essay "Edvard Munch. Et Forsøg" may also be found in Sigbjørn Obstfelder, Samlede Skrifter, III, pp. 283-292.

[28] Edvard Munch som vi kjente ham. Vennerne fortaeller (Oslo: Dreyers Forlag, 1946), pp. 37-62.

[29] Ibid., p. 37.
"Sigbjørn Obstfelder gave the introductory lecture, and he supported his precious friend with life and soul ...".

[30] Ibid., p. 37.
"...tuberculosis and madness predominate in Munch's family and that one has to keep this in mind if one wants to understand his art".
Dr. Scharffenberg later in a letter dated 1963 expresses his unhappiness about these remarks. The latter was published in Ragna Stang, ed., Farge paa Trykk (Munch Museum catalogue, 1968), p. 27.

[31] Ibid., pp. 40-41.
"Of course this was a coarse attack against such a hypersensitive, nervous person as Edvard Munch, and I remember that he was deadly pale as he stood leaning against a wall listening. The whole thing was probably a sinister experience for him ...".

[32] Samlede Skrifter, III, p. 283 and p. 284.
"poet of color... lyrist of color".

[33] Ibid., p. 290.
"Munch sees the woman as she who carries the wonder of the universe in her womb. He returns to this concept over and over again. He attempts to depict in all its horror that moment when the feeling awakens in her; he paints the cold, black shadow strongly on the wall to acquaint us intensely with it".

[34] Hannevik, Obstfelder, p. 174.

[35] Samlede Skrifter, III, pp. 289-290.

"For me his Madonna picture is the quintessence of his art. It is the earth's Madonna, the woman who gives birth through pain. I believe one has to look to Russian literature to find such a religious interpretation of the woman, such a glorification of the beauty of pain. That which lies at the bottom of life is not clear for our eyes, not in form, color, or idea. The emergence of life has become shrouded with a secretive loveliness and terror, which not even ten human senses would be able to define, but which a great lyrist can pray to. The longing to elevate the human out and up, again to enlarge that which our daily exertions has diminished, shown in its original secretiveness, reaches here the ultimate and becomes piety".

[36] In the Haandskrifts afdeling (manuscript collection) at the University Library, Oslo we have consulted a letter from Jens Thiis to Anders Stilloff, dated Paris, April 5, 1928. It was sent to Stilloff after he had written an article about Obstfelder's play De røde draaber. In this letter Thiis sets forth some of his memories of the relationship between Obstfelder and himself.

> "...When he left for America, and as I that summer had not been well and, at that time, was in Valdres, I did not have the opportunity to say good-bye to him. But he sent me as a remembrance a small booklet with the poems that he had written. On the cover he had written "Tannhäuser-marschen". Unfortunately, this manuscript has been lost due to lending it to others. I took it along on my longer trip abroad and showed it in Berlin to Chr. Sinding, Munch, and Gunnar Heiberg. Munch was probably the one who then understood him best...".

Trygve Nergaard has later found a copy written by Vilhelm Krag of this booklet among Krag's letters and manuscripts at the University Library, Oslo. (Private conversation with Nergaard, summer 1975). So we have here definite proof that Krag knew Obstfelder's poems before his own were published, and also that they had been read to or by Munch around the turn to the decade (1890).

[37] Munch Museum collection, letter from Krag to Munch, dated July 1, 1892.

[38] Munch Museum collection, letter from Krag to Munch, undated, probably from the middle of July, 1892. "Has Obstfälder [sic] visited you?".

[39] Obstfelder, Breve, letter to Herman, July 1892, p. 144.

[40] Personal conversation with Trygve Nergaard, Oslo, summer of 1975.

[41] Inger Munch, ed., Edvard Munchs brev. Familien (Oslo: Oslo Kommunes Kunstsamlinger, 1949), p. 146. "I have met many nice people - Count Prozor, who translates Ibsen's works in Paris, invited me to a great dinner along with Lugné-Pöe".

[42] Obstfelder, Breve, letter to Herman, Stockholm, October 1894, pp. 190-191.

"Lugné-Pöe, who recently has presented several Norwegian plays, especially by Ibsen, was here and presented Rosmersholm, I did not like it, - it did not succeed in Kristiania or Copenhagen. On the other side the Maeterlinck-soiree was much more captivating. Lugné-Pöe is actually an American and is supposed to be related to Edgar Pöe, that is why he is using the name Pöe, in addition to the fact that Pöe now is one of the demigods of symbolism. The Norwegian painter Edvard Munch has also been here, and his art-revolutionary paintings have been much discussed in all circles here...".

This geneology between Edgar Allan Poe and Lugné-Pöe is not correct as I. Langaard shows, Edvard Munch. Modningsaar (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1960), p. 190, note no. 265.

[43] Munch, letter to Inger, p. 148.

[44] Ibid., letter from Inger, p. 276.

[45] Ibid., letter from Dagny Juell, undated, from Berlin, p. 138. Svenaeus in his Edvard Munch. Im männlichen Gehirn (Lund: Vetenskaps-Societeten, 1973), I, p. 212, note no. 13, p. 338 dates this letter June, 1896.

[46] Munch Museum collection, postcard from Helge Rode.

[47] Munch, p. 158, letter to Inger from Paris, not dated but probably from July or August, 1896. "I am with Obstfelder during the day and off and on with Strindberg who is rather old now...".

[48] Munch Museum collection, letters and postcards from Jonas Lie and Erik Lie.

[49] Edvard Munchs brev fra Dr. med. Max Linde (Oslo: Oslo Kommunes Kunstsamlinger, 1954), p. 25.

[50] The periodical Pan is said to have been named by Dagny Juell after Hamsun's novel of the same name.

[51] In Munch's library, which is now in the Munch Museum, there are four volumes of Obstfelder's works. There is a first edition of Digte (Poems) published by Joh. Griegs Forlag, Bergen, 1893. This was the book for which Munch was to have made a vignette. In it is written in Obstfelder's handwriting "E.M. fra S.O." (E.M. from S.O.) with no date, however. There are no comments or notes in this small volume, but it appears well used. The other three volumes are the play, De røde draaber (The red Droplets), published in 1897 by Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, Kjøbenhavn, and Skrifter I and II (Writings, I and II) published in 1917 by Gyldendalske Boghandel, København and Kristiania. There are no dedications in the play and of course none in Skrifter I and II, and no comments throughout the text, either.

[52] Among these are the following writers: Chr. Collin, Reidar Ekner, Valborg Erichsen, Trygve Greiff, Birger Juell-Tønnessen, Vilhelm Krag, Christian Krohg, Sven Moren, and Valborg Sønstervold.

[53] Arne Hannevik, Obstfelder og Mystikken (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1960).

[54] See our note no. 24.

[55] Samlede Skrifter, II, "Korset", pp. 41-119.

[56] Hannevik, Obstfelder, p. 186.

[57] Samlede Skrifter, III, pp. 305-308. Excerpts from "Jeg-formen i litteraturen.".
"Jeg-formen is born of the desire to reach the soul of a person or the various emotional states which manifest themselves... Jeg-formen also is born of the need to search more deeply. The drama presents characters in terms of their external reflections; the novel combines and knits together persons and events. Jeg-formen desires to present that which is behind all of this. In this respect it is a monologue. But it is more. ...

It is an independent art form... One can say things using this form which previously were not said, which strike those for whom the writer is writing like lightning".

[58] Johan Faltin Bjørnsen, Sigbjørn Obstfelder. Mennesket, poeten og grubleren (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1959).

[59] Ibid., p. 55.

[60] Samlede Skrifter, III, pp. 227-234.

[61] "Diskussjon" was commented on by Hannevik and Bjørnsen and also by Josef Nilsson, "Sigbjørn Obstfelders Mystik", Edda, aarg. 20, bind XXXIII, hefte 3 (1933), p. 356, in Francis Bull, Frederik Paasche et al., Norges Litteratur (Oslo: Aschehough & Co., 1969), V, pp. 244-245, and by Olav K. Brodwall, "Sigbjørn Obstfelder. Digtning-personlighet og psykose", Edda, aarg. 35, bind XLVIII, hefte 4 (1948), p. 389.

[62] Hannevik, Obstfelder, p. 36.

[63] Ibid., p. 100.

[64] Beyer, IV, p. 123.

[65] Carl Burchardt, J. P. Jacobsen og andre essays (Oslo: Cappelens Forlag, 1947), p. 181.

[66] Nilsson, p. 357.
"the dream of the completely pure, unspotted, she is the madonna, her thoughts embrace the suffering man as a clean garment".

[67] Olav K. Brodwall, "Sigbjørn Obstfelder. Digtning - personlighet og psykose", Edda, aarg. 35, bind XLVIII, hefte 4 (1948).

[68] Ibid., p. 388.
"It is notable that Obstfelder with his women characters does not represent the distinctly feminine; it is in the proper sense the human - independent of sex - which interests him".

[69] Ibid., p. 388.

[70] Ibid., p. 388.
"people with a predominent introverted soul activity".

[71] A. H. Winsnes in Bull, Paasche et al., Norges Litteratur (Oslo: Aschehough & Co., 1961), V.

[72] Ibid., pp. 251-252.
"the elementary nature being".

[73] E. Bergendahl, "Sigbjørn Obstfelder. Hvorledes en idealist betragter Kvinden", Urd, aarg. 25 (1921), pp. 517-518.

[74] Ibid., p. 517.

[75] Eivind Berggrav, "En liten slutord om Obstfelder", Kirke og Kultur, 25. bind (1918), pp. 253-254.

[76] Christian Claussen, "Ideindholdet i Obstfelders digtning", Kirke og Kultur, 26. bind (1919), pp. 98-100.

[77] Berggrav, p. 254.

[78] Christian Claussen, "Grundmotivet i Obstfelders digtning", Tilskueren, 38. aarg., bind 1 (1921), pp. 412-421.

[79] Johan A. Mortensen, Sigbjørn Obstfelder. Hans forhold til Kvinden og Erotiken (København: Munksgaards, 1940).

[80] Ibid., p. 47.
"The thinker, the brooder, the wanderer who looks and looks, who grapples with the riddles of life and who ponders, studies, meditates toward finding the meaning with life. But the central is Eros, or rather the woman, the earthly - superearthly, life's cause and goal, the mother of God and mankind. So highly ranks the woman with Obstfelder".

Carl Naerup in his introduction to Obstfelder's Skrifter, I and II (København: Gyldendal, 1917), advances similar sentiments, I, p. 10.

[81] Aasta Hansteen, "Sigbjørn Obstfelder", Kirke og Kultur, 8. bind (1901), pp. 75-87.

[82] Christian Claussen, Sigbjørn Obstfelder. I hans digtning og breve. En psykologisk studie (Kristiania: Gyldendal, 1924).

[83] Magnus Lund, Sigbjørn Obstfelder, Unpublished dissertation, University Library, Oslo, # 411 (1934).

[84] Ibid., p. 82.

[85] Ibid., pp. 116-117.

[86] Stanislaw Przybyszewski, Franz Servaes, Willy Pastor, and Julius Meier-Graefe, Das Werk des Edvard Munch (Berlin: Fischer, 1894).

[87] Ibid., p. 27.

[88] Hans Dedekam, Edvard Munch (Kristiania: 1909).

[89] Jens Thiis, Edvard Munch og hans samtid (Oslo; Gyldendal, 1933).

[90] Otto Benesch, Edvard Munch (New York: Phaidon, 1960).

[91] Carla Anna Lathe, The Group Zum Schwarzen Ferkel. A Study in early Modernism, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of East Anglia (1972).

[92] Ingrid Langaard, Edvard Munch. Modningsaar. En studie i tidlig ekspresjonisme og symbolisme (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1960).

[93] Benesch, p. 17.

[94] Lathe, pp. 322-323.

[95] August Strindberg, "L'exposition d'Edward Munch" La Revue Blanche, No. 10, June 1, Paris (1896), pp. 525-526.

[96] Arve Moen, Edvard Munch. Kvinnen og Eros (Oslo: Norsk Kunstreproduksjon, 1957).

[97] Jan Askeland, "Angstmotivet i Edvard Munchs Kunst" Kunsten idag, hefte 78, nr. 4 (1966).

[98] Gösta Svenaeus, Edvard Munch. Das Universum der Melancholie (Lund: Vetenskaps-Societeten, 1968).

[99] Trygve Nergaard, Refleksjon og Visjon. Naturalismens dilemma i Edvard Munchs kunst 1889-1894, Unpublished dissertation, Munch Museum, Oslo.

[100] Ole Sarvig, Edvard Munchs grafik (København: Gyldendal, 1964).

[101] Ibid., p. 46.
"For Munch Eros and death are an inviolable solidarity. Eros is that death which begets life, begets all suffering, creates all happiness, which in turn begets suffering ".

[102] Pola Gauguin, "Mennesket Edvard Munch" Kunst og Kultur, 29. aarg. (1946), pp. 107-109.

[103] Erna Holmboe Bang, Edvard Munch og Jappe Nilssen (Oslo: Dreyers Forlag, 1946).

[104] Ibid., p. 83.
"Woman is created for the destruction of man, and that man and woman always have to oppose each other as enemies. But in this fight it will always be the man who is defeated because he has no weapons to oppose the woman's wiliness other than his loyalty and his chivalry".

[105] Rolf Stenersen, Edvard Munch. Naerbilde av et Geni (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1946).

[106] James L. Foy, "Psychotic Painting and Psychotic Painters" in Aisthesis and Aesthetics,ed. E. Strauss and R. M. Griffith (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne Univ. Press, 1970).

[107] George W. Digby, Meaning and Symbol in three modern Artists, Edvard Munch, Henry Moore, Paul Nash (London: Faber, 1955).

[108] Stanley Steinberg and Joseph Weiss, "The Art of Edvard Munch and Its Function in his Mental Life", The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 23 (1954), pp. 409-423.

[109] Ibid., p. 411.

[110] Ibid., p. 411.

[111] Reinhold Heller, Edvard Munch's "Life Frieze": Its Beginnings and Origins. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Indiana University (1969), p. 7.

[112] Stenersen, p. 121.

[113] Such repetition is found in the studies by Foy, Steinberg and Weiss.

[114] Frederick B. Deknatel, Edvard Munch (New York:

Museum of Modern Art, 1950), pp. 13-15.

[115] Ibid., p. 43.

[116] Eli Greve, Edvard Munch. Liv og Verk i lys av Tresnittene (Oslo: Cappelens Forlag, 1963), p. 85.

[117] Ibid., pp. 20-22.

[118] Ibid., p. 21.
"more than familiarization - it is the mysterious identification of the genius".

[119] Ibid., p. 49.
"the instincts' blind ecstasy".

[120] J. P. Hodin, Edvard Munch (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972).
Edvard Munch. Nordens Genius by J. P. Hodin was originally published in Stockholm in 1948. Here the revised and translated edition will be used.

[121] Werner Timm, The Graphic Art of Edvard Munch (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1969).

[122] Ibid., pp. 55-57.

[123] Ibid., p. 58.

[124] Ibid., p. 57.

[125] Sarvig, p. 111.
"In the portraits one sees him [Munch] seek her [woman] as a human being and then often be startled by her as sex. Or he can approach her as sex and marvel over her a a human being".

[126] Arve Moen, Edvard Munch. Kvinnen og Eros (Oslo: Norsk Kunstreproduksjon, 1957).

[127] Ibid., p. 13.
"He became a bohemian with puritanical counter-conceptions, and these strong differences in his mind led to a continuing struggle for control. Perhaps here we find the causes for the intensity and the expressiveness in his paintings. Among other things their purpose was to persuade himself!".

[128] Ibid., p. 17.
"with the lover's subjective passion, hate, jealousy, and despair".

[129] Ibid., p. 20.

[130] Ibid., p. 31.
"a personal philosophy where woman was depicted both as vampire and as hetaera".
However, we would like to point out that it is quite possible that Munch did not have such a rigid and structured philosophy as is suggested by Moen.

[131] Ingrid Langaard, Edvard Munch. Modningsaar. En studie i tidlig ekspresjonisme og symbolisme (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1960).

[132] Gösta Svenaeus, Edvard Munch. Das Universum der Melancholie (Lund: Vetenskaps-Societeten, 1968) and Edvard Munch. Im männlichen Gehirn, I and II (Lund: Vetenskaps-Societeten, 1973).

[133] Prominent among these, with respect to discussing the congeniality of Obstfelder's and Munch's art, are Jens Thiis and Reinhold Heller while a number of other scholars have in passing noted that Obstfelder and Munch shared similar concerns. Such a list of scholars would include: Roy A. Boe, Edvard Beyer, Ingrid Langaard, J. P. Hodin, C. A. Lathe, Magnus Lund, Johan A. Mortensen, Harriet Krebs, James W. McFarlane, Hans Dedekam, Aasmund Brynildsen, J. Gill Holland, Gösta Svenaeus, Josef Nilsson, and Rolf Stenersen. Trygve Nergaard has mentioned the closeness of Obstfelder and Munch very briefly in his published work. In a personal conversation in the summer of 1975 he elaborated on his beliefs and his interest in the two artists and the period before the turn of the century.

[134] Stenersen, p. 189.
"I have heard him say that Obstfelder's poems had given him material for several paintings...".

[135] Erna Holmboe Bang, Edvard Munchs Kriseaar. Belyst i Brever (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1963), p. 57.
A letter dated Kristiania, March 1909 written to Munch by Jappe Nilssen substantiates that not all titles for works are given by Munch himself. Jappe Nilssen writes: "The exhibition has now opened. It was a difficult struggle to figure out which titles fitted the pictures... For about one hundred, I believe, there was neither title nor price [He refers to the graphics]. I then attached a superficial title...".

[136] Benesch, p. 23.

[137] Munch Museum collection. Unpublished manuscript. Eva Mudocci memoirs.
"One seldom finds in Norway this beautiful relationship between man and woman which is half sinful and half sacred".

A PARALLEL STUDY OF THE DEPICTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND WOMAN

Introduction

We have shown that Obstfelder and Munch shared a common interest in reflecting upon and depicting the relationship between man and woman. We have also shown that interest in such ideas was prevalent in intellectual circles in Oslo in the 1870s and 1880s, where the role of woman had come up for review. The social role of woman was reassessed in relation to herself as an individual being, thus also bringing about a changed attitude in her relationship to the opposite sex and to society in general. The intelligentsia of Norway was quite vocal through its writings and discussions regarding the change of the social mores. Indeed, as Munch stressed in his pamphlet explaining the origins of his Life-Frieze, from which we shall examine several works, the primary ideas for it were "undfanget under samtale og stemninger fra bohemtiden - ved bordene paa Grand - og ved turer i lyse naetter".[1] Although this pamphlet was written much later in Munch's life (1918) he took care to emphasize that the concepts for his works were formed early in response to the ideas prevalent during his early manhood in Oslo. In the case of Obstfelder, we have demonstrated that he not only knew the leading personalities in the Bohême fejde but also actively participated in discussions about the roles of men and women.

In many cases scholars have shown that the Obstfelder and Munch literary and visual depictions were closely related to the two artists themselves. These views would further substantiate the contemporary emphasis on creating art dealing with the subconscious and being partly autobiographical. Since the theme

of man's and woman's relationship is a very primeval one, Obstfelder and Munch would have to be able to use this theme both as an emotional and an artistic device. It is obvious from autobiographical material that both men were consciously interested in examining and depicting such relationships. Both Obstfelder's personal correspondence and oeuvre show the extent of his preoccupation with this theme. Similarly, Munch has, in his pictorial representations, shown various situations pertaining to relationships between man and woman, and has, in his many statements and diary entries, written on the subject. Heller points out that neo-romanticism, of which Obstfelder was a leader, was focusing "particularly on emotional moods and the subjective relationships existing between persons. In the 'artistic credo' of 1891 as well as in the 'St. Cloud Statement', Munch declared similar aims for his art."[2]

As previously indicated, Obstfelder's works have not been as intensively explored by scholars as Munch's.The interpretations regarding his views on the relationships between man and woman have not generated as much controversy as those of most of Munch's interpretors. In spite of the disparate nature of these opinions, an example of the two artists' handling of the theme of man-woman relationships will reveal that because - as previously shown - they were both affected by the cultural climate and current ideologies of Oslo, they shared and projected common perceptions, and thus actually have a closer kinship than critics have hitherto proposed.

Much of Obstfelder's and Munch's art illustrated and examined the relationship between man and woman, but this interest was also a manifestation of their

greater interest in mankind. The relationship between man and woman involved one aspect of mankind's existence, but one essential for its continuance and complete fulfillment. Thus Obstfelder and Munch were depicting relationships between man and woman in their works and, through these depictions, obviously were showing their positive and negative attitudes toward interrelations of man and woman. They demonstrated that an identical situation or act may simultaneously be attractive or repulsive. As pointed out by scholars Obstfelder and Munch frequently made use of woman as a negative motif, although we will show that they often portrayed the female psyche sensitively, and provocatively exposed her joys and fears of being. Consequently, we propose to establish that they projected through their art an understanding, perhaps unconsciously, of the deepest feelings and attractions between the two sexes. They showed that relationships could have devastating effects or could be satisfying and enriching for one or both parties. Obstfelder wrote on the interrelations of man and woman in several of his works, such as Digte, Liv, Esther, and Korset, and Munch showed a similar interest in the paintings included in his Liebes-Fries, which he later expanded into the well-known Life-Frieze.

We will compare and contrast Obstfelder's writings and Munch's visual works to examine how they interpreted such relationships. For Obstfelder we will concentrate primarily on Korset, a short novel written during the summer of 1896 in Denmark and Paris. The Munch material has been selected primarily from works created in the late 1880s and throughout the 1890s which were the years when Munch was formulating his most viable and personal images, subject matter he was to use

recurringly throughout his long career. He did develop new topics after the turn of the century, but the essence of his art had its inception prior to this century. Many of the pictorial depictions chosen were part of Munch's Life-Frieze, a series that he was continually adding to whenever he felt he had created a work that complemented it.

Because an examination of the literary and pictorial material concerning man-woman relationships shows that such relations often follow a three phase pattern, beginning, culmination, and termination, we have chosen this division to organize our study.

Korset, 1896, a short novel about men and their jealousy over a woman, presents, like other of Obstfelder's works, events narrated in the first-person singular by a male character. This narration continues until near the end when the work incorporates the diary and a letter by Rebecca, the female character. The narrator first meets Rebecca and enjoys a casual relationship that develops more deeply later; he also meets the sculptor Bredo, who knew Rebecca earlier and with whom he feels an instinctive kinship. Finally the narrator meets Rebecca's former husband. The narrator's lack of responsiveness drives Rebecca to suicide, but this occurs after she has deceived the narrator, with whom she had had a close psychological and sensual bond. Throughout Korset failure to communicate feelings between individuals creates overwhelming psychological stress.

Korset is a good example of Obstfelder's neo-romantic writings where the events are presented to the reader as the recollections of a narrator. Thus there is no logical chronological progression of the narrative, but the narrator interjects a number of

episodes or tableaux concerning their relationship. The tableaux are separate in time and place, but belong to a whole, each revealing a deeper insight into the characters involved and into the circumstances surrounding the events. Obstfelder's method of presenting separate yet thematically related episodes lends itself to comparing his tableaux with visual works.

Munch, early in his career, disassociated himself from predominantly realistic and factual depictions of people, interiors, or landscapes. His paintings are suffused with subjective impressions about the subject matter, with colors and brushstrokes betraying the artist's personal choice and involvement with the subject matter and canvas. Munch branched away from the established and formalized into a personalized style, one that later added impetus to German Expressionism. Munch's paintings deal with human beings that relate to themselves as well as to the viewer. This intensity is similar to Obstfelder's writings, a point which further lends support to our comparisons between the literary and visual works.

Beginning of a Relationship

At the opening of Korset, the narrator creates in his imagination a picture of Rebecca as she might have been as a young woman, since he did not know her then, and would not have known how she acted and felt at that time. Within the first few pages of the novel the narrator reveals that his mental creation is real to him and more relevant than the now slightly older Rebecca, whom he has recently met. The fantasy image of Rebecca that the narrator creates shows a perceptive understanding of, and identification with, a young woman at the stage between adolescence and maturity, a time when she is desperately struggling to come to terms with the physical and psychological changes occurring. Prior to writing Korset Obstfelder had concerned himself with this subject matter in poems written around 1890[3] where he described the quickly changing feelings of young women in the process of maturing. These sensitive descriptions are examples of the poet's powers of observation and ability to comprehend the scope of young adulthood. In Korset Rebecca, as described by the narrator, is a lively and active young woman who, obviously bothered by the change she is experiencing, does not know how to deal adequately with the anxiety reflected by her psychological uncertainty and indecisive actions.

In order to present a pictorial correlation with Rebecca we will study portrayals of women by Munch to determine how the contemporary painter presented a similar subject matter. Pubertet, first version now destroyed, painted in 1885-86, other versions in oil, 1894 and 1895, depicts a young girl sitting on a bed. Here we have no traditional sweetness but a young

woman afraid to move from the edge of her bed, a passive and bewildered human being afraid of her body. Munch has perceived her state of turmoil, her body manifesting that she is a maturing woman and her brain endeavoring to assimilate this fact, leaving her frightened and disoriented. The literary and visual portrayals of these young women differ in how the women react to their transformation. Rebecca is active, attempting to relieve her anxiety by doing things while the girl in Pubertet, still shocked, sitting frozen, is trying to grasp the significance of her entree into maturity.

The woman depicted in Munch's Stemmen bears a resemblance to Rebecca as shown in the beginning of Korset. Stemmen, oil ca. 1893, depicts a statuesque young woman, facing the viewer and turning her back to the trees and the young people in the boat in the background. The painting was included in Munch's Liebes-Fries under the title Sommernachts-Traum. Servaes describes this painting as a young woman

> ... wie in einer bleichen Mondnacht am Meer zum ersten Male der Geschlechtswille sich steif in ihr emporreckt, und wie das Mädchen einsam-brodelnd im Gehölz umherschweift, alle Glieder nervös gespannt, die Hände auf dem Rücken ineinandergekrampft, den Kopf in den Nacken geworfen, und die Augen aufgerissen, weit und vampyrhaft aufgerissen.[4]

It is difficult to agree with the "vampyrhaft" that Servaes attributes to this depiction, or with Moen's belief that the painting shows the "overgitte og forlatte kvinnes sjalusi".[5] Nothing in the painting itself, nor the earlier and present titles, suggests or supports such narrowly defined interpretations. Indeed, the painting is closer to Pubertet in format and content, showing another frontal female who is

attempting to decifer her inner self, the subconscious powers of which she has just become aware. It is significant here that such understanding and convincing depictions of women originated in two male artists. This indicates that such feelings are experienced by both sexes and that perhaps the artists themselves had felt, quite strongly, the realization of becoming a sensual being. Indeed, Moen suggested this was the case for Munch.[6]

Korset's narrator is a man who wants a relationship with Rebecca which is unstructured and without ties. Thus the narrator is there when Rebecca comes, he holds her, kisses her, but does not really want to know about her and her life apart from their time together. He neither knows nor cares what she has done during her absence from him. For some time their relationship remains one where no questions are asked and where no bonds are established. The narrator wants to relieve Rebecca's sadness and give her peace; he is pleased when she declares she loves him, but at this stage in their relationship he still plays a strange dispassionate role neither getting personally involved nor expressing any sexual desires for Rebecca.

Munch's views on male-female relationships are quite different. In Carmen(Smuget), 1895, and Straedet(Carmen), 1902, we have a lithograph and an etching depicting a frontal nude and a clothed woman, respectively, passing between two rows of fully dressed men. The woman, in each case shown in a social context, not only has to come to terms with her own physical and psychological maturity as in Pubertet, but also has to cope with how men view her. The fully clothed male figures, apart from the first two men, are not given fully identifiable and individualized

faces; rather their faces are degraded or satirized. Only the first heavy man to one side of the woman is looking directly at her and his hand, white against his dark clothing, is reaching toward the woman. From her gestures she appears to have pushed her way through the two closely positioned rows of dark figures. While many Munch interpretors have assessed the above works as woman tempting man by exposing and offering herself to him, we would suggest that these depictions are closely related to Pubertet. The female figures in the lithograph and the etching, while more mature than in Pubertet, still signify the individuals' insecurity. In Pubertet the young woman is fearful of the changes within her, while here the women are frightened and bewildered about their roles as females in society, roles they have not yet understood. Again, Munch demonstrates a perceptive understanding of a woman's feelings about her role in society, an issue heatedly discussed, as we have shown, by Oslo's intellectuals.

An analysis of how sexual desires are depicted in these two works reveals that the male figures, especially the large man with the outstretched hand, are more aggressive. Two other works, Henderne, oil ca. 1893, and lithograph 1895, depict a central woman surrounded by outstretched hands. One of the more prominent hands in the lithograph is quite similar to the hand in Carmen(Smuget), lithograph of 1895, where a man is shown reaching for the woman next to him. In both cases the depicted males' hands are aggressive and lusting for the female, although none of these enigmatic hands are actually in contact with her. But the woman in the 1895 lithograph of Henderne, which Timm incorrectly titled Lust,[7] is markedly different

from the woman in Carmen (Smuget). In Henderne, lithograph, she is half turned away from the grasping hands, looking arrogantly or mockingly over her shoulder, as if to encourage her pursuers. While the hands are aggressive, the woman here is also actively participating, with the interest equally divided between the two sexes. This is not the case with the painting of the same name, done by Munch in 1893, depicting a frontal, partially clothed woman surrounded on both sides by outstretched hands. The woman is not concerned with the aggressive hands but is fully absorbed in herself, with her face having a serene expression. The bewilderment shown by the woman in Carmen (Smuget) was not present in the woman in Henderne, oil, for she is portrayed as a woman sure of, and secure in, herself. She has matured psychologically as compared to the Pubertet and Carmen (Smuget) depictions and now considers herself a complete human being who, although surrounded by greedy and demanding hands, shows complacency and confidence. We would state that, contrary to other Munch interpretors, woman is not tempting man in the aforementioned works. She is actively participating only in one, Henderne, lithograph, while in the other depictions she is concerned with her social and personal roles. Further, it should be pointed out that, in these as well as in other Munch works, the man is the aggressive party, while Obstfelder's male characters primarily are reticent and less apt to actively pursue a physical relationship with a woman.

In Dragning I, lithograph 1896, Munch depicts in the foreground the heads of a couple set off against the land, sea, and sky of the background. No obvious symbolic overtones are present, neither

party is pursuing the other, only two young people gazing into each other's eyes. As in Kyss Munch is here showing two people having a balanced interest in and attraction for each other. Kyss exists in several versions and in several media, oil twice in 1892, and again ca. 1893, an etching from 1895, and a woodcut from 1897-98. It was also part of the Liebes-Fries and received much critical review early in Munch's career. Kyss shows one aspect of physical love, one where the young man and woman have discovered themselves as maturing people interested in each other and experiencing, through a kiss, their first heterosexual contact. The two people press their mouths and bodies together, feeling each other's curves and warmth. We see in Kyss a desire by both to get as close together as possible, and, from the artist's point of view, an endeavor to show both their physical and psychological desires for getting to know each other, rather than absorbing and annihilating each other, as many critics have suggested. Considering that Kyss probably developed out of the pencil sketch, Adjø, ca. 1890, it would appear more obvious to interpret Kyss in a positive manner as we have shown. Historically, Przybyszewski's and Strindberg's interpretations of 1894 and 1896 set the tone for the negative views that followed. Przybyszewski wrote in Das Werk in 1894:

> Diese Art der Symbolisierung ist allerdings etwas ungewöhnlich; aber die ganze Brunst des Kusses, die furchtbare Macht der geschlechtlichen, schmerzhaft lechzenden Sehnsucht, das Verschwinden des Persönlichkeitsbewusstseins, das Verschmelzen zweier nackten Individualitäten, ist so ehrlich empfunden, dass man über das Widerlich-Ungewöhnliche hinauskommt.[8]

Strindberg's review in La Revue Blanche, 1896 follows

similar lines:

> Baiser - La fusion de deux êtres, dont le moindre, à forme de carpe, parait prêt à engloutir le plus grand, d'après l'habitude de la vermine, des microbes, des vampires et des femmes.
>
> Un autre: L'homme qui donne, donnant l'illusion que la femme rende. L'homme sollicitant la grâce de donner son âme, son sang, sa liberté, son repos, son salut, en échange de quoi? En échange du bonheur de donner son âme, son sang, sa liberté, son repos, son salut.[9]

It can be concluded from the above statements that Przybyszewski and Strindberg were expressing their strong personal viewpoints and well-established beliefs without considering any alternative interpretations for a painting depicting a kissing couple. Since Munch, Przybyszewski, and Strindberg were quite familiar with each other at the time of these statements, it might follow that the opinions expressed by Przybyszewski and Strindberg were shared and encouraged by Munch. We would strongly disagree with such a possibility since the critical literature on Munch, and his own statements, support that he had already formed his opinions before encountering the misogynistic Przybyszewski and Strindberg. Furthermore, it will be recalled that Strindberg in Inferno actually called Munch "women worshipping", a statement which would be inconsistent with his depicting a carp-like woman swallowing a man in Kyss. It should also be remembered that the painting was part of the series, Liebe, so that it is most unlikely that Munch would paint and exhibit throughout Northern Europe a series called Love if he really held views on relations between man and woman similar to those cited above. Had he wanted to demonstrate that hate and destruction are the primary goals in a relationship, then he

could have demonstrated this more succinctly by naming his series 'Hate', 'Destruction of the Male', or 'Destruction of Mankind'. But he did not, thus maintaining that love is the important ingredient in a relationship. Although in this series he could have shown love as a constructive and destructive force, both lifegiving and deathbringing, in Kyss there is insufficient evidence for a negative interpretation of love. While it is true, as pointed out by Moen that in other works such as Piken og Døden, ca. 1893, and Dødskysset, 1899, Munch makes a more provocative statement by substituting for the male a traditional image of death ("mannen som føler sin egen utilstraekkelighet i elskovkampen, viker plass for en rival som ogsaa er kvinnens overmann"[10]), interpretations of the latter two works cannot arbitrarily be superimposed on the earlier work, Kyss.

The importance of kissing is obvious in Korset and is mentioned frequently. After a visit to the studio the narrator describes one of Bredo's sculptures, one depicting a woman whose whole body concentrates on the action of kissing. This statue presents an obvious similarity with Munch's Stemmen. The statue was made by Bredo with Rebecca as the model. In Korset Obstfelder does not dwell on negative aspects as Strindberg would have in his writings; here the kiss is a starting point for a woman who wants to fully enjoy life. The action is a positive one both for herself and the person being kissed. Toward the very end of the short novel when we finally hear from the woman, we learn from her diary that she is concerned about her relationship to men and her quest for happiness. She wants happiness,[11] yet she does not fully believe that it is obtainable. She discloses

her inner conflicts, her rejection of her womanhood, yet feels there is so much beauty inside her that ought to be given a chance to blossom. When she is happy, when she has found the man whom she feels "has created"[12] her, she then refers to kissing. She writes "nu er der bare et eneste stort kys til i verden".[13] This statement best describes the moment Bredo's statue is symbolically striving for, a stage to which Munch's kissing couple may also aspire. Rebecca is not straining to kiss now as was the sculpted woman, as she has achieved happiness - happiness through the man of whom she says "som du kysser ingen i verden".[14] The emphasis placed on kissing in Korset and the evidence of several versions of Kyss by Munch support Obstfelder's and Munch's interest in showing how kissing can bring two people together and strengthen their physical and psychological relationship.

Livets Dans,1899-1900, by Munch serves as a good pictorial illustration of several situations in Korset. Livets Dans depicts four figures in the foreground, three women and one man. The center woman, dressed in red, is dancing with the man. On each side of the couple stands a woman, one dressed in white and the other in black, colors that might symbolize youth and old age, virginity and widowhood. The obvious comparison to make is between the woman clad in white and Rebecca, as she was before she met any of the other characters, or, at least, as the narrator thought of her until he became more aware of her previous life and acknowledged its importance to him.

In the very beginning of the short novel we are given a description of a young person, Rebecca, who is always changing and unsure - a very sensitive

depiction of early maturity in either a male or a female, changing from happiness and silliness to sadness and severity. In Livets Dans the white-clad woman appears eager to become involved, a feeling equivalent to Rebecca's anxious cries of "jeg vil, jeg vil".[15] Rebecca, or the white-clad woman, wants to get involved so she can get to know life, and get to know herself.

Several times in the first part of Korset the narrator commented on how little he knew of Rebecca, wondering why he discovered more of her after listening to Bredo and seeing his statues than by actually observing her. Perhaps Obstfelder is here indicating that the narrator (and people in general) absorbs things better when related through another person or another medium. Or is he just reemphasizing that Rebecca was known so well by the two men, but in different ways, so that Bredo's perceptive interpretation of her could not but help the narrator's understanding of her? After these conversations with Bredo the narrator, appearing to fight against his bourgeois upbringing and his philosophy of personal freedom and independence, develops a greater interest in her background, and begins to wonder if she really belongs to him. Previously they had tacitly agreed on a casual relationship, enjoying each other without questions or obligations; a concept similar to the 'free relationships' that Jaeger and the Kristiania Bohême had advanced. While this transitional stage during which the narrator expresses his desire for a different and more stable relationship has no visual parallel in Munch, it leads up to the next phase of the relationship.

Culmination of a Relationship

This stage of a relationship denotes that each person has reached a basis of understanding individually and between themselves. Their desires having been fulfilled, they are at ease with themselves and are experiencing happiness. While the duration of this stage may be of varying lengths, in Korset it is approximately three months, with the majority of these spent by the sea. While the couple's happiness is greatest in this environment away from the city, it is also where the final and devastating events occur. While the narrator's and Rebecca's joy begins with their sexual union, which is of major importance to them, their relationship is based to a higher degree on mutual trust and shared understanding. The happiness experienced by them is equally distributed between physical and psychological closeness. Obstfelder's and Munch's depictions of this phase bear a great deal of similarity. We will first analyze these in the light of Obstfelder's personal writings on the sexuality debate.

We have discussed how in the beginning of the relationship the narrator, assuming a cautious role, was available to Rebecca when she wanted to visit him, but he never did actively pursue her, and he did not know what she did when she was away from him. At this time her life away from him did not appear to matter very much to him. It was only after his friendship with Bredo that the narrator's feelings toward Rebecca began to change. He wanted to know if she belonged to him, a possessiveness which he had not sought previously. Was it because he at this stage of their relationship wanted to be the only one

in Rebecca's life, or did this change stem from the views expressed by Bredo, in particular his call for showing deference toward woman? Although we are not given many details concerning Bredo's and Rebecca's relationship, she continually appears in his statues, as observed by the narrator. Since Bredo could not work when Rebecca left him, she is essential to his creativity. Here we have the traditional concept of the inspirational muse, which did not really appear to be strong in contemporary artistic circles in Oslo, but which could well have been of personal importance to Obstfelder, for, in his letters, we continually find references to his desire for the companionship of a woman who, through marriage, would give impetus to his creativity.[16]

Rebecca's and the narrator's relationship reaches happiness after she returns to him, a slightly different woman, more mature, more sure of herself. It is interesting to note that it is the woman who solidifies the relationship, although in this case the narrator has sent letters begging her to return. But that is the most active gesture the man makes since he never actually seeks her out to plead his love to her. It is also Rebecca who invites him to have sexual intercourse, and for him this experience is of paramount importance. Obstfelder has gently and sensitively depicted the events and feelings leading to this moment:

> Hun drog mig, som sjøen drager midsommernat. Jeg følte hendes bryst naer mig. Jeg følte, at det var mit, at jeg kunde se det, kysse det. Og jeg voved ikke.
> Jeg rørte ved hendes brystnål.
> Hun saenked blikket.
> En stund efter sa hun, - og det var som ordet skjalv frem dybt nede fra noget dulgt og i mange år gjemt:
> - Du maa.[17]

While the narrator's courtship of her is not physically persuasive, he indicates through his thoughts that he is deeply attached to and concerned about her, Rebecca being the only woman he has intimately known and loved. The narrator's reticence is in keeping with Obstfelder's earlier views on the physical relationship between man and woman. The semi-autobiographical article, "Diskussjon" in Nylaende, 1887,[18] describes the young poet's ethical views on sexuality, a topic then prominent in intellectual circles in Oslo. It concerns itself with a young man's desire for the opposite sex and his psychological fight to remain pure for the woman that he will one day meet. This is difficult as he is physically and mentally tired of this struggle and, what is more shattering, the effort is not appreciated, as his male friends find him abnormal and women fail to appreciate the sacrifices he has made. Bjørnsen points out that Obstfelder had taken this to heart and was sad that youth would not fight to remain pure, which caused his belief in people and his idealism to be weakened.[19] The reason for these viewpoints is to be found in Obstfelder's very pietistic home and his aesthetic outlook. Accordingly, Bjørnsen points out that woman was deemed to be pure and good and one had to be worthy to have a relationship with her. During his youth Obstfelder wrote to a friend:

> Du, - jeg synes, det er noget saa nyt og originalt det bare at have én kjaereste. ... Jeg tror fuldkommet, det er saa som du siger, at det sande, sunde, varige kjaerlighedsforhold maa bygges paa faelles interesse, s:venskab. - Lad jaegerske theorier vaere aldrig saa sande jeg skal gjerne forsvare dem, men leve paa dem vil ikke jeg... [20]

It is interesting that Obstfelder mentions Jaeger here and is quite in keeping with his idealistic beliefs

that he would defend Jaeger's ideas even if they did not appeal to him personally. Obstfelder was not interested in Jaeger's concepts of 'free love' but was concerned with finding a woman he could trust, love, and with whom he could establish a stable and lasting relationship. In a letter to Mr. and Mrs. Eckhoff, dated Bruges, October 22, 1892, Obstfelder referred contemptuously to the prostitutes he saw in Paris and reiterated his wishes for peace, for a home, and for a wife. But he also wondered whether it was really beneficial that he had abstained from sexual relationships since he "anerkjender jo sanselighedens ubønhørlige lov", but he concluded that he would not succumb to temptation.[21] According to Brodwall a similar dilemma is expressed in Obstfelder's works through the male characters who rarely achieve stable and secure relationships with the opposite sex. In Obstfelder's writings various difficulties are commonly encountered by the characters, always hindering rapport. Brodwall concludes that the roots of this problem rest in the author's personality and can be fully understood only through a complete examination of Obstfelder's mental development.[22] Hannevik, in his study of Obstfelder, postulates the view that, although the poet felt himself to have been selected to live a richer and better life than the rest of mankind, he also had to come to terms with the question of his sexuality:

> Det er for det første ikke rent nok i sig selv og derfor maa det tuktes ved en slags askese. Men angsten virket ogsaa biologisk betinget, en direkte redsel for kvinnen som kjønnsvesen...[23]

This fear of sex reappears often in Obstfelder's <u>oeuvre</u>, Hannevik says, sometimes combined with a fear of death, as if death and sexuality were inseparable partners.[24] This view is analogous to the common

interpretations of Munch's Piken og Døden. While Rebecca's death is the result of an unfulfilled relationship, Hannevik in his discussions refers to the male as being the victim; thus Korset does not conform to this postulated pattern. Furthermore, the fear of sex, mentioned by Hannevik, does not manifest itself in this short novel. The couple's positive feeling about sex is indicative of their solidified happiness at this stage of the relationship, while their indifference to sex toward the end of the four months signifies the breakdown of mutual trust and desire.

Obstfelder, prior to the article which appeared in Nylaende, had given an unusual and infrequently discussed lecture on feminism[25] where he advanced the view that the contemporary attitudes on emancipation were not desirable. He expressed the belief that

> ...kvinnens plass ikke var i embeder og stillinger, hun var født til aa vaere mannens støtte i kampen for tilvaerelsen. Denne plass kunne hun ikke utfylle med laerdom og embetsstilling, men ved aa vaere som hun var skapt og alltid hadde vaert.[26]

It is reported that in the ensuing discussion Obstfelder asserted that he did not want ideal love lowered to a materialistic level.[27] Obviously Obstfelder was struggling to find a meaningful philosophy regarding the roles of man and woman. Rebecca, in her letter, expresses a sentiment similar to the one expressed in the lecture:

> Du er mand, og du har saameget at udrette paa jorden endnu. Men jeg venter paa dig. Jeg er kvinde, og kvinden er til for at gi manden mod og kraft til at gjøre alt det, han skal gjøre paa jorden.[28]

While Rebecca's words may be comparable to those of a subjugated woman it must be remembered that Rebecca has finally found the man she had looked and longed

for. She has found happiness, and the couple is in perfect agreement about their attitudes, goals and roles in life.

We will now examine the most significant events during this period in Korset and parallel them with visual works by Munch, first Madonna and then Vampyr.

It is after the spiritual and sexual union that the couple had their three months of complete happiness where they shared their lives and experiences with each other. Through Rebecca's diary and letter, that she left for her lover, she expresses her innermost feelings and longings. All her life she has had an enormous quest for happiness, a happiness that she wanted badly but did not really believe she would ever actually gain. Consequently she is overjoyed when the narrator comes into her life. The narrator relates how under his influence her physical appearance began to change almost as if he possessed god-like powers:

> Jeg vilde fortaelle om, hvordan hun, hvis ansigt var gammelt, trist, da jeg så hende første gang, forvandledes, der kom nye traek, der udslettedes rynker, hendes øine fik farve, hver dag gjorde hende yngre.
>
> Jeg vilde fortaelle om den lykke det var, at dette skyldtes mig. At jeg havde magten til det.[29]

This physical awakening, soon to be followed by a sensual rebirth, is comparable to Munch's Rødt og Hvitt, oil, ca. 1894, and Kvinnen, oil, ca. 1894, where the white-clad women (virgins?) on the left have to be 'awakened' to life through a man's love, and are facing him in unashamed joy following their sensual 'awakening'. Rebecca's transformation may be partially illustrated by Livets Dans, where the centrally placed woman is dressed in red and is held

by a man, although not in a close embrace as in Kyss. The center couple in Livets Dans could be interpreted as illustrating an unstable relationship in which the couple is striving toward happiness, or where their closeness has deteriorated. This latter eventuality will occur during the last month of the narrator's and Rebecca's time by the sea, although in the beginning their liaison on the coast was filled with happiness.

The narrator's comment, after his first experience of sexual intercourse with the woman he loves "ti for mig var det livet",[30] parallels views expressed by Obstfelder in "Diskussjon", written almost ten years before Korset. Now that the man has found his chosen mate, he can give full expression to his love. Obstfelder's unusual interpretation of Munch's Elskende Kvinde, during the autumn prior to the publication of Korset, offers insight into both men's works. As we have already mentioned, Obstfelder gave this interpretation in a lecture to the Students' Association in Oslo after seeing Munch's show at Blomqvist's in Oslo a month before and his show in Stockholm the previous October.

Elskende Kvinde, or as it is now more commonly called, Madonna, is a relatively early work of Munch's, being part of the Liebes-Fries and later included in his Life-Frieze. He has returned to this motif often and executed the image in several media. It was first painted in 1893, and in total was painted in five different versions, along with two colored lithographs and an etching. It depicts a threequarter nude female figure with her head thrown back, eyes closed, and arms behind her back and head. The background of deep shadows, sweeping contours, and color bands makes

it an unusual and emphatic work. Munch described the work as "Kvinden der gir sig hen - og faar en Madonnas smertelige Skjønhed".[31] However, he did not entitle it Madonna immediately upon its completion.

Included in the above mentioned exhibitions in Stockholm and Oslo were Munch's relatively new series, Die Liebe/Kärlek/Love. In the catalogue from the Stockholm exhibition the entries, numbers 60 and 61, are called Kvinnan som älskar. We do not have a catalogue from the Oslo exhibition, but, from newspaper reviews following the show's opening, it is obvious that the painting was still titled Elskende Kvinde. Strindberg, in his review of Munch's exhibition in Gallery L'Art Nouveau in Paris, calls the painting 'Conception'.[32] Moen feels that, because Munch was ambivalent in his reactions and relationships to women, this would quite logically lead him to depict woman at the moment of conception as both Elskende Kvinde and Madonna.[33]

Obstfelder in his essay calls this painting Munch's Madonna picture, the Madonna of the earth[34] and talks about woman giving birth to a new generation through pain, which is revealing because the title of the work, Elskende Kvinde, would quite commonly refer to the moment of orgasm or conception, not to birth. Strindberg, as mentioned previously, referred to the painting in the following fashion:

> Conception. - Immaculée ou non, revient au même; l'auréole rouge ou or couronne l'accomplissement de l'acte, la seule raison d'être de cet être sans existence autonome.[35]

In Das Werk des Edvard Munch Przybyszewski writes about the work as depicting a Madonna who shows "intenseste Wollust" and the "Glorienschein des kommenden Geburtsmartyriums".[36] Servaes talks about the painting

Das Madonnengesicht as depicting "der Moment kurz vor dem höchsten Liebesrausch und der seligsten Hingabe".[37] It should be pointed out that the work was first titled Madonnengesicht which Munch then changed to Elskende Kvinde. But had Obstfelder read Das Werk or had he heard the viewpoints of the Berlin-based circle before preparing his Munch lecture and essay? It is significant that he calls the woman in the painting a Madonna, but why would he interpret Elskende Kvinde in such an unusual fashion, when he goes on to say in his essay:

> Det er kvinden som den, der i sin livmoder baerer jordens største under, Munch ser. Han kommer atter og atter tilbage hertil. Han søger at fremstille i al sin gru det øieblik, da følelsen deraf vaagner hos hende selv, han maler den kolde, sorte skygge sterkt paa vaeggen forat saette os levende ind i det.[38]

The last sentence could be considered to refer more appropriately to Pubertet than to Elskende Kvinde. The first painting, however, was not included in either the Stockholm or the Oslo show, although Obstfelder would certainly have been familiar with it. Is Obstfelder here trying to give a particular interpretation of Munch's art, seeing woman as part of the chain of life, giving birth to coming generations rather than experiencing intense personal pleasure as indicated by Munch's title? Does he realize that at this moment of sexual pleasure conception may take place which would ultimately turn into intense pain before a female's function is done? Is that what he is attempting to convey? Incidentally, in his book of 1909, Dedekam is in full agreement with Obstfelder's interpretation[39] and surprisingly, Lathe also agrees with Obstfelder and Dedekam, believing that Munch here depicted woman as having "the function of reconciling

man to death by offering him a continuation through children".[40] This may be true in view of later interpretations, and Munch's own elaborations on the theme, but we must recall that Obstfelder made his observations in 1895, and Munch had named the painting Elskende Kvinde in 1893.

Madonna is an exceptional work in Munch's oeuvre. It reinforces our previous observations regarding his perceptive understanding of the female psyche and supports that he was ahead of his time in creating sensitive and daring depictions. It shows a woman experiencing extreme and absolute pleasure. She is beyond physical and emotional pleasure to almost having reached a euphoric state. She is a visual symbol of the narrator's ecstasy after the physical union with Rebecca when he says that for him it was life("ti for mig var det livet"). Both artists have in a perceptive and succinct fashion presented what lesser artists would have spent many paragraphs and canvasses on. Rebecca and the narrator share three months of supreme happiness together. Never had the narrator experienced such uninterrupted happiness, and Rebecca was able to finally find the man and the happiness that she had hoped for all her life, but never actually believed she would find.

We would like to cite Munch's private notations to a version of Madonna and relate his words to a prose work by Obstfelder. In his 'Kundskapens trae paa godt og ondt' Munch wrote the following concerning Madonna:

> Pausen da al verden standset sin gang. Dit ansigt rummer al jordens skjønhed. Dine laeber karmosinrøde som den kommende frugt glider fra hinanden som i smerte. Et ligs smil. Nu raekker livet døden haanden. Kjaeden knyttes der binder

> de tusind slaegter der er døde til de tusind slaegter der kommer.[41]

Munch's statements heighten the contrasts between life and death, between a living beauty and a corpse. However, such contrasts are more evident in the graphic versions of Madonna than in the paintings where the woman is shown with a serene expression on her face. Munch indicates with his works that both life and death are involved during birth, and consciously makes woman a necessary link between past and future generations. Obstfelder and Munch express similar ambivalent feelings concerning procreation and birth. Munch's views together with Obstfelder's interpretation of Madonna, where a woman gives birth through pain, establish a parallel with Obstfelder's short prose poem, Bugen (The Belly), dated October 1893, Copenhagen.

> " Kvael mig," hvisker det.
> Som den hede scirocco fra den sorte afgrund.
> Saa blir der en pause, en lang mathed, og et mørke, som dulmer, og de to øine, de to øine med det nye glimt.
> Men med et springer hun op. Hun ruller op gardinet. Hun springer op i vinduet. Hun er nøgen.
> - "Ser du mig?"
> Derinde natten. Derude dagen.
> Paa kvindens svulmende bug falder morgenens blege straaler.
> Det høie, hvide mellem natten og dagen, var det hans hustru?
>
> Den hede, dampende bug baerer den hans barn?
> "Ser du mig?"
> - - Og han lusker afsted, i det kolde graalys, ned mod bryggerne. Fiskeaadslerne stinker. I det grøngraa vand møder ham hans ansigt, idiotisk, dødt.
> Slumrer hans barns spire derinde i den svulmende, dampende bug?[42]

In common with other scholars, Claussen has commented on the unusual treatment of the subject, where Obstfelder indeed deviates from commonly encountered descriptions of the pregnant woman as the joyful

expectant mother-to-be glorying in her temporarily expanded girth. Claussen's reaction to Obstfelder's poem is one of bewilderment since he does not feel that this work was a true expression of Obstfelder's beliefs and hopes that the writing of Bugen was caused by Obstfelder's illness. Claussen says:

> Det er uforstaaelig, at Obstfelder med hans aerbødighed for den fødende kvinde har kunnet gi en saa motbydelig skildring, som ikke burde vaere trykt. Det skimtes ogsaa en viss følelse av hat i det, som ellers er ham fremmet.[43]

As Claussen points out there is an element of hate, but Obstfelder's hate is not directed toward the female sex but rather hate by the woman for her own grotesquely distorted body and her discomfort. While the work is an unusual one in Obstfelder's oeuvre, and daring for its time, it shows an excellent understanding of how a woman may feel during her pregnancy. Obstfelder explicitly points to the physical discomfort but probably is indicating implicitly the psychological concerns which birth and motherhood may bring. Being perceptive about the mixed feelings that woman have concerning motherhood, Obstfelder, for example, in Korset, has Rebecca recall the night she gave birth to her child. She speaks of the pain involved and how she did not really want to face life and reality again. The relationship between the child and her is not developed in the story. Although quite happy with the child, Rebecca feels she needs to live her life, and her relationship with her daughter is intermittent. As mentioned previously when discussing the young Rebecca and Pubertet the two artists show an exceptional understanding and knowledge of women.

We will now examine, using several works to illustrate our discussion, how the couple in Korset

spent their happy moments together and how they related to each other.

During their months of happiness when the narrator and Rebecca become familiar with each other, he relates to her in poetic terms his knowledge and thoughts on

> ...menneskenes liv paa jorden, om stjernernes dans, om dødens løndom. ... Jeg forsøgte at faa hende til at skimte livets linjer fra det laveste mod høiden, fra det inderste mod periferien.[44]

Rebecca tells him about her childhood, which is the first time that the reader is exposed to actual conversations between the primary characters in Korset. It is revealing to note their topics of conversations in that the narrator exposes Rebecca to metaphysical and scientific topics while she dwells on her childhood memories. The narrator wonders if she is actually listening to him. He does not comment on her words but Rebecca, in her letter to be read by the narrator after her death, reveals how important his words were for her. She feels that because he had expressed such thoughts, she, having understood them, can indeed face death, with death being something beautiful.

Their relationship is characterized more by instinctive understanding of each other's thoughts than by extensive verbal communication. This unconscious understanding was complemented by physical contact in that they often sat close together for hours just listening to each other's heartbeat. Pictorial analogies here would be the already discussed Kyss and Vampyr.

Vampyr, existing in several painted and graphic versions dating from the early 1890s and on, was first part of the Liebes-Fries and later the Life-Frieze.

It depicts a seated woman bending over a man who hides his face in her lap, without their facial characteristics being indicated. This work has been interpreted by critics as depicting a couple where the man has given up or has been overpowered by a dominating female. We would suggest that an alternative interpretation be made of this painting, one illustrating a close harmonious relationship between a man and a woman, one where neither party has absolute power but where they, as in Kyss, have established a close satisfying physical bond.

It has been postulated that a close friend and a frequent correspondent with Munch from 1890 on, the Danish poet, Emanuel Goldstein, had influenced Munch in terms of the vampire theme. Goldstein had written a small collection of poems, published in 1892, for which Munch drew a vignette. One of the poems, Til Hende (To Her), could have sparked Munch's interest in the vampire image it develops.[45] However, had there been a direct influence, then the title of Munch's painting should have been Vampyr from the very beginning and not Liebe und Schmerz as was indeed the case. The painting was not a preplanned work as documented by Adolf Paul:

> ... En annen gang i det samme vaerelse! forteller Paul videre. En annen modell, denne gang ikke nogen mørkhaaret, men en med ildrøde lokker som fløt om henne som utgydt blod.
> - Knel for hende! ropte han [Munch] til mig. Legg hodet i hennes skjød! Jeg adlød. Hun bøide sig over mig, trykket lebene mot min nakke, hennes røde haar rislet ned over mig. Og paa kort tid hadde han sin "Vampyr" ferdig, dette billede som han siden saa ofte gjentok i tresnitt og litografi.[46]

Therefore, the title could have been just as easily and more accurately 'Woman consoling Man', and the

depiction would indicate the tenderness of a young couple, with all the negative female connotations being removed.

We are not convinced that Munch actually agreed with the title as evidenced by a letter written by him to Thiis where he says, "Vampyr er egentlig det der gjør billedet litteraert, det er i virkeligheten blot en kvinne der kysser en mand paa nakken".[47] Gierlöff asks in his essay on Munch how the painting received its name since he felt that Munch was only depicting a woman kissing a man, and not initially including symbolic and literary influences. He offers the explanation that Munch was not interested in titles, but let fashion dictate his titles:

> Hvordan var forresten bildet kommet til a hete "Vampyr"? Munch mente ikke noe litteraert med dette maleriet, bare en kvinde som kysser en knaelende mann i nakken. Men det var i Ibsentiden- og naar folk endelig ville gasse sig i symbolsk uhygge og kalte idyllen for Vampyr, saa hvorfor ikke? sa Munch. Bildet var altsaa mye bedre enn han i sin enfoldighet hadde trodd. Han tok det sjelden nøye med titlerne, de gjorde da hverken fra eller til i den maleriske verdi.[48]

As already mentioned the work was exhibited originally with the title Liebe und Schmerz but then Przybyszewski in his review of the exhibition and later in Das Werk introduces the woman as vampire:

> Ein gebrochener Mann und auf seinem Nacken ein beissendes Vampyrgesicht. ... Der Mann da rollt und rollt in abgründige Tiefen, willenlos, ohnmächtig, und freut sich, dass er wie ein Stein so willenlos rollen kann. Den Vampyr wird er doch nicht los, den Schmerz wird er auch nicht los werden, und das Weib wird immer da sitzen, und wird ewig beissen mit tausend Natternzungen, mit tausend Giftzähnen.[49]

This interpretation of woman as vampire is, of course, consistent with Przybyszewski's whole philosophy

regarding sex roles. One would then presume that Strindberg would forward a similar, if not stronger, viewpoint, but in his review of 1896 he says:

> Cheveux rouges. - Pluie d'or qui tombe sur le malheureux à genoux devant son pire moi implorant la grâce d'être achevé à coups d'épingle. Cordes dorées qui lient à la terre et aux souffrances. Pluie de sang versèe en torrent sur l'insensé qui cherche le malheur, le divin malheur d'être aimé, c'est dire d'aimer.[50]

Moen describes Vampyr as "den sammensunkne mannsskikkelsen omklamret av en kvinneskikkelse, som suger all kraft ut av ham"[51] and Digby says "so for him [Munch] woman is a vampire, sex is a mockery which leaves the soul unsatisfied, man is always lured by woman to his undoing."[52] All of the above comments and interpretations characterize the traditional negative views of Munch's female characters. One scholar, Svenaeus, does indicate a preference for a more positive interpretation of Vampyr by saying that Trøst could be seen as a counterpart to Munch's Vampire theme:

> Die Frau in "Trost" ist die Verzweifelte. Sie schlägt schreckerfullt die Hände vor das Gesicht - eine Synthese aus "Pubertät" und "Der Schrei". Der Mann, der sie in seine Arme schliesst, hat die Rolle des Trösters. Dieser Rollentausch in der Dialektik der Geschlechter zeigt, wie weit Munch von einer einseitigen Vampirphilosophie entfernt ist.[53]

If we now look at Vampyr, we have a close-up intimate setting where a woman bends over a man, her hair cascading over him. The man is clothed, the woman appears to be naked. It might just as well refer to Trøst or to an au revoir scene, as to one where the woman is draining a man of his bodily strength. In terms of Munch's original title, Liebe und Schmerz, did he actually mean that one of the persons had to represent love and the other pain?

Or was he just indicating that an intimate relationship between the sexes, at some point in time, encounters these dual properties? There are sufficient ambivalent stylistic and interpretational qualities in Vampyr to warrant quite different meanings. We would suggest here that the quiet contours and colors indicate a harmonious scene with the viewer's attention centered on the couple set off against the dark background. There is no agitation present, no gestures indicating a bloodsucking vampire image but rather a serenity comparable to the scene where Rebecca and the narrator sit close to each other enjoying physical contact. Both scenes elicit quiet feelings and, if pain has been experienced by the persons involved, it has lost its sharpness leaving the two people at peace.

We can use the painting Vampyr to illustrate additional literary descriptions. In an autobiographical statement probably from the early 1890s Munch has written:

> Han følte saan trang til at gribe om noget fint og blødt at laegge sit traette hode ind til en blød fin kvinnes bryst indaande parfumen høre hendes hjerteslag, føle henpes bløde runde bryster ind til sit kind...[54]

He then goes on to describe how a woman comes to a man, presumably Munch himself, and how he vacillates between his desire for, and his dislike of, her. It is somewhat similar to Obstfelder's poem Navnløs (Nameless),[55] which was included in the small volume Digte, published in 1893. Obstfelder and Munch depict two very similar situations where a man seeks peace and tenderness with a prostitute. In the poem Obstfelder regards the woman primarily as a member of her sex, and not as a prostitute. The experience remains beautiful and satisfying for the

man in Obstfelder's poem, while this is not the case for Munch's man. Munch's female begins to speak, to reproach the male, causing class differences to emerge which leave the male repulsed. In both these cases the two people can easily share physical tenderness and bring some measure of relief to each other. However, contrary to this phase of the narrator's and Rebecca's relationship, the two above described situations do not develop into firm and satisfying relationships. During the three months of happiness Rebecca and the narrator develop a tender and close bond, as well exemplified by our suggested alternative interpretation of Vampyr.

While the narrator's and Rebecca's first encounters took place in the city, it is significant that Obstfelder sets the couple's joyous months in the country, close to the sea. Although the final and devastating episodes, including Rebecca's suicide, also take place there, the destruction was directly influenced by the incidents that had occurred in the city, in particular Rebecca's return to Bredo. For Obstfelder an urban setting is much more tempestuous than a rural scene.

The significance of the seaside setting for the characters in Korset is to serve as a mirror of their inner peace, that peace they now feel toward themselves and for the other person. The quietness and vastness are exemplified by the sea, the waves, and the sun. The harmony of the couple's relationship is portrayed in their surroundings. This is also evident in several works by Munch, for example To Mennesker (De Ensomme), 1895, Dragning I, 1896 and Dragning II, 1896, in each of which a couple is depicted on the seashore with the open sea in the background. The

landscape is not distorted, but reflects the harmonious sentiments of the couple. The depiction of happiness is illustrated by the following description from Korset, where the narrator recounts one scene where they, late at night, wander down to the sea, sit down, and playfully declare their love to each other by shouting it out over the water:

> Hun kom ned. Hendes haar flommed om skuldrene. Vi satte os paa en sten. Hun sa:
> - Nu slaar jeg haaret om dig.
> Saa slog hun sit haar over mig, og jeg gjemtes i det.
> - Elsker du mig? sa hun.
> - Jeg elsker dig.
> Saa slog hun haaret tilbage og sa:
> - Raab ud over sjøen: Jeg elsker dig.
> Jag raabte:
> - Jeg elsker dig.
> Ekkoet, som var i naerheden, gjentog:
> - Jeg elsker dig.
> - Hører du hvordan det skvulper? spurgte hun.
> - Ja.
> - Hører du hvad det skvulper? Det skvulper: Jeg elsker dig.
> - Hører du, det blaeser? Det blaeser: Jeg elsker dig.
> Saa gjemte hun mig atter i haaret, og saadan sad vi. Det var somom hun vilde gjemme mig bort for noget ondt.[56]

The scene, apart from the hair imagery, is very reminiscent of Munch's lithograph of two people seen from behind looking over the sea, called The rising Moon, from his Alpha and Omega series, 1909. The nude couple is sitting close together on a hill overlooking the sea. Munch wrote a text for Alpha and Omega and his words pertaining to The rising Moon are: "In the evening they sat huddled closely watching the path of the moon on a placid sea",[57] a situation close to that described above by Obstfelder. Both artists stress the close harmonious relationship between man and woman and between mankind and nature.

Toward the end of the narrator's and Rebecca's time by the sea the narrator comments on the changes he perceived occurring when the peaceful surroundings became stormy and violent, occurring simultaneously with an ebb in the couple's relationship. A similar image is present in some of Munch's works where people's feeling of anguish, anger, or fright is projected on to their surroundings as in the well known works, Fortvilelse, 1892, Skrig, 1893, and Angst, 1894. In all of these paintings the horror of the persons is projected through shapes and colors on to their natural surroundings. The image is distorted by the emotions radiating from the figure. This eeriness of the surroundings is more prevalent during the last stage, that of deterioration of the relationship, where urban settings are included. An analogous painting by Munch is Aften paa Karl Johan, 1892, which will be discussed later.

Munch and Obstfelder have a predilection for the use of hair imagery, and for eye imagery, which Ibsen also employed. The narrator, referring frequently to Rebecca's hair, relates in the passage quoted that Rebecca "gjemte ... mig atter i haaret, og saadan sad vi. Det var somom hun vilde gjemme mig bort for noget ondt".[58] Her hair and their love were protecting them from the outside world. Munch quite often gives hair the supernatural quality of creating or facilitating contact between two people with or against their will, to the point of stifling the personalities, as in Frigjøring I, Frigjøring II, 1896, and Vampyr. The woman's hair in these works may be seen as engulfing or binding the man, keeping him under the woman's influence. However, the opposite interpretation of hair could be to protect the

man, or to create intimate spiritual and physical contact, as in Dragning I, 1896, Dragning II, 1896, Salome, 1903, Mannshode i Kvindehaar, 1897, and Vampyr. The descriptions of hair imagery in Vampyr are diametrically opposite but the image is so equivocal as to warrant such interpretations.

A rather ambiguous depiction also related to hair symbolism is Munch's 1896 lithograph called Elskovpar or Par i bølger. Here the undulating pattern is present not only in the water but also in the woman's hair which swirls around a man's head. The woman's facial expression and the wavy bands radiating from her face are similar to the lithograph of Madonna, 1895. Elskovpar is comparable to a prose work by Obstfelder called "Chopinske toner(notturnet)" which was first brought to the attention of scholars by Nergaard. "Chopinske toner(notturnet)" was published in 1889 in the Norwegian Students' Association's newspaper and shows Obstfelder's almost uncanny ability of anticipating, or possibly influencing, Munch's works. While Nergaard suggests that the essay be compared not only to Elskovpar, but also to To Mennesker(De Ensomme), Frigjøring, and Stemmen, we would like to suggest possible similarities with additional visual works in Munch's oeuvre as well as certain aspects in his illustrated literary work, Alpha and Omega. In "Chopinske toner(notturnet)" and Alpha and Omega, both strongly visual literary works, the two artists stress the symbolic qualities of hair. Munch has illustrated Alpha and Omega with black and white lithographs, and Obstfelder's prose work could without difficulty and to its advantage be illuminated by selected pictorial images by Munch. Again we encounter a kindred spirit

between the two Norwegians.

Hair symbolism was used by Munch from the 1890s and on. Nergaard[59] and Svenaeus[60] refer to Maeterlinck's Pelléas et Mélisande and Goldstein's poems as possible sources or stimuli for this usage. Lathe mentions Strindberg's interest in "electric currents or other rays and fluids in the atmosphere which surround the individual",[61] concepts which apparently fascinated Munch. Hair, that is long red hair, according to Steinberg, Weiss and Greenacre, "represents not only the incorporating tendencies which he [Munch] attributed to woman but also the female phallus".[62] Hair and the stylized representations of moonlight, these critics maintain, is interpreted as Munch's "defence against castration anxiety".[63] These unconventional views may certainly be contested and a different interpretation advanced. However, it is indisputable that Munch was preoccupied with hair imagery as is supported by his visual works and his writings.

Munch has left scholars several autobiographical drafts, diaries, and sketchbooks with comments on specific works and his oeuvre in general. Some of these comments date from the same time that the paintings were done, others from later dates. To further substantiate Munch's interest in hair and its metaphysical qualities we will look at some of his statements. The works Dragning I and Dragning II were executed as lithographs in 1896. Dragning I was probably based on Øie i Øie, oil 1893, a work where hair is given no symbolic meaning. However, in both graphic versions of Dragning, the woman's long hair is linking together the two heads shown in profile. Obstfelder in his essay on Munch commented

on the large and strange heads shown against the starry sky in Dragning I, but he did not analyze the work further. Munch's notes to this work are:

> Manden og kvinden traekkes til hinanden - Kjaerlighedens underjordiske kabel ledet sine strømme ud i deres Nerver. Ledningerne bandt deres hjerter sammen.[64]

Munch here may have the visual strands of hair symbolize or reinforce his written comments about cables and wires. He elaborates on this concept in his words about the complementary image - if we may call it that - to Dragning I and Dragning II namely Frigjøring I and Frigjøring II, lithographs from 1896:

> Jeg symbolisierte forbindelsen mellem de adskilte ved hjaelp af det lange bølgende haar. - - - Det lange haar er en slags telefonstreng.[65]

In the above Munch equated hair to a kind of telephone-wire which would indicate that, artistically, hair or wavy lines has the quality of establishing contact with another person and creating an emotional bond between two people. This concept is further illustrated by the following autobiographical sentences, "da du forlod mig over havet var det som ennu fine traade forenede os. Det sled som i et saar".[66] The following from another manuscript of Munch's, perhaps a fragment of a proposed novel or short story, is an almost identical statement to the above, but not as autobiographical. The parentheses indicate what Munch himself has crossed out.

> Selv da hun forsvandt over havet følte han (det som om den) som om hendes haar som fine traader bandt (ham til hende) dem sammen - Det smertede som et evigt aabent saar.[67]

There are several pages of drafts concerned with this imaginary couple, where Munch is making hair symbolism an important psychological part of their relationship.

He is proposing in his literary and visual works that hair can suggest and heighten contact between man and woman, as in Dragning, and, when the relationship is deteriorating as in Frigjøring, can visually indicate the previous link of shared affection and experiences, and how it hurts to break them. Munch is suggesting that hair imagery may have positive and negative connotations.

In a letter from 1933 Munch specifically touches on the literary and symbolic contents of his works. He writes:

> Naar du naevner Livsfrisen og de forskjellige billeder der benaevnes symbolske eller literaere, saa maa du huske paa, at der var en sideordnet artistisk linje samtidig. ... Jeg søgte forenkling - hva jeg forresten til alle tider har gjort. Det var jernkonstruksjonen - - - Eiffeltaarnet. Det var den spendte bue der senere blev forslappet til Jugendstil.
> - Bølgelinjen havde forresten ogsaa faeste i opdagelsen og anelsen av nye krefter i luften.[68]

It is significant that he emphasizes that the viewer should look not only at the content but also at the style of a work. Munch does not refer to hair specifically but he points to the wavy lines and not only ties them to an artistic style, Jugendstil/Art Nouveau, but also points out that the style was scientifically based. This might, indeed, have been stimulated by Strindberg's interest in rays and electric currents in the atmosphere. By his use of wavy lines and hair, Munch combines stylistic, symbolic, and scientific trends prevalent in the 1890s.

Termination of a Relationship

This last and decisive phase of a relationship is characterized by conflict and torment. The relationship in Korset had progressed toward a phase of happiness as shown in the preceeding discussion. However, the relationship could not maintain its stability because complete trust and communication did not fully develop between the protagonists. In Korset, for instance, the couple rarely specifically question or accuse each other about the doubts and distrust they have. Similar patterns of interaction between man and woman are presented elsewhere in Obstfelder's works. However, in the case of Korset where a firm base is not established because of the lack of trust and communication, Obstfelder infers through Rebecca's letter that the relationship might be continued after death in order to be totally fulfilled. In Munch's works there is no suggestion that relationships resume after death, but his depictions quite often center on the conflicts that arise between two people of different sex. Thus Obstfelder's and Munch's works often illustrate psychological torture and insecurity, as well as the classical triangle where an outsider destroys a relationship. In this section we shall examine these situations in greater detail and, in order to emphasize the two artists' affinity, we shall review Obstfelder's and Munch's artistic philosophies, which coincide to a large degree.

In Korset, during the months of happiness there are periodic conflicts between Rebecca and the narrator who remain, despite their shared joy, separate personalities. They can and will relate to each other on some but not all topics. While this was

acceptable to both during the first phase of the relationship, indeed, desired by the narrator, he later wants to know more about Rebecca. Most of the questioning and the conflicts develop within each character and are not communicated to the other. It is significant that many of Obstfelder's and Munch's characters show this same aloof, or singular, desire of getting only so close to another person, then unconsciously drawing back as if afraid to fully enter into a relationship. Livets Dans, 1899-1900, by Munch is a good example of this. We introduced this work when discussing the first phase of the narrator's and Rebecca's relationship, comparing the narrator's fantasy picture of Rebecca as a young woman with the white-clad woman in Livets Dans. This work is also illustrative of Munch's attitude toward interrelations between the sexes. The woman dressed in white is anxious to participate, her whole body's position and the gesture of her arms betray this desire which is analogous to Rebecca's cries of "jeg vil, jeg vil" (I will, I will), which express her desire to become actively involved in life. The center couple, with the woman dressed in red, is placed between the white 'virgin' and the black 'widow' if we may be allowed to attach such labels to the framing women. As already discussed, the white-clad woman is eager to participate in life, while the woman dressed in black, by her resigned pose and gestures, symbolizes the end of happiness and of active involvement. The central couple in Livets Dans, because of its position between the white and the black symbolic figures, supposedly would indicate the ultimate joy of life such as that briefly attained by Rebecca and the narrator in Korset during their joyous months by the

ocean. However, if the central couple is carefully studied, it becomes evident that their relationship is not solidified, but is in abeyance. Munch's couple, like Rebecca and the narrator, may want to be close psychologically and physically, but like Obstfelder's protagonists, this desired ideal situation cannot be achieved. Many Munch depictions bear out this frustration of not reaching mutual trust between man and woman. The reasons for such choice of subject matter are probably to be found in Munch's personal life and his less than tranquil experiences with women. Similarly, Obstfelder's personal failure to achieve a stable and close relationship with a woman leads him to describe the interactions between man and woman as frequently encountering obstacles and not reaching the desired summit.

The breakdown of Rebecca's and the narrator's relationship is not sudden and dramatic, but is characterized by times of confidence intersperced with times of suspicion. Most of the significant changes occur within each of the two characters, with no verbal fighting or making up. In fact little communication in general is present adding to the insecurity of the two characters. The narrator has close ties with Bredo and the friendship and conversations between the two men are of significance for Rebecca's and the narrator's relationship. In the first conversation with Bredo the narrator is told two things by the sculptor; firstly that one ought to show deference ("aerbødighed") for a woman's smile of happiness, and secondly, that one has no right to torture oneself or other human beings. The torture that Bredo refers to, found explicitly or implicitly several times throughout the novel, is of a

purely psychological nature, affecting all the characters in Korset at one time or another. When the narrator talks about the period of his and Rebecca's relationship where they were torturing or tormenting each other, with the man being especially malicious, he indicates that he did not really want to hurt her, but that he could not help himself. Bredo has indicated in their conversation that he had had similar experiences with her. The torture between the narrator and Rebecca was of a psychological-introspective nature, while Rebecca's disagreements with her first husband appeared to have been concerned solely with physical and spiritual aspects of their sexual relations. This torture may be visually illustrated by the dancing couples in the background in Livets Dans, where the relationships appear to be of a degenerate character, at times the teaser may be the woman (couple left of center), at times the man (couple right of center) corresponding to Rebecca and her first husband, and Rebecca and Bredo, respectively. This analysis of Livets Dans is open to different interpretations but what we want to stress is that the depicted gaiety in the background of Munch's work, though outwardly lively and innocent, does not actually appear on close inspection to be the case. We should note the couple to the left in the near middleground where a leering greenfaced man is swinging a woman around without her being able to retain her foothold. This betrays the artist's understanding of the debased character of a relationship which either willingly or unwillingly has been created by the person directly involved in it.

Livets Dans is a complex work, highly applicable and illuminating as a visual depiction of Rebecca and her life as described in Korset. It not only concerns

itself with different phases or aspects of one woman but also points to her interaction with the other sex, with life, and how these shape her outlook and destiny.

Before looking at other destructive elements in the narrator's and Rebecca's relationship we would like briefly to stress that, while the happy phase of their relationship took place by the ocean, each made separate trips to the city, and it was primarily these trips that caused the conflicts leading to the final break. In Obstfelder's works urban scenes usually have undesirable connotations. This view is illustrated in three prose poems, Den Forladte, Byen, and Norske Sommerstemninger,[69] and of course in Korset. The narrator in search of Rebecca leaves the peaceful seaside on two occasions. His descriptions of the cityscape betray his own inner turmoil. The narrator reveals his distress on both of these trips and his impressions of the city, its streets, buildings, and inhabitants are much like those that exude from Munch's Aften paa Karl Johan, oil 1892, and Angst, oil 1894. In both works the viewer is confronted with a stream of people moving out of the picture frame, their heads crowned by prominent hats but their faces are featureless and ghostlike. The literary and pictorial descriptions are psychological projections of an individual's emotional state. The artists and their characters are not favorably disposed toward the city and its mass of impersonalized inhabitants, but feel annihilated. It is significant that both artists use the same device of the impersonalized crowds and the cityscape mirroring the psychological emotions of the person immediately involved. This is naturally most evident in Munch's famous Skrig, oil 1893, which is thematically linked to Angst, and is a strong statement

of an individual's fright and isolation which are echoed throughout the surrounding countryside. The device of using the surroundings to reiterate and reinforce emotions is not employed by Munch in Aften paa Karl Johan but the tall threatening buildings on the left appear to direct and enforce certain directional and spatial limitations on the crowd on the sidewalk, indicating the power of the city environment. To further support analogies between Munch's and Obstfelder's works, the narrator in Korset relates how the city buildings stare at him like monsters with many eyes:

> De store huse i gaderne saa ned paa mig som uhyrer med mange øine. Det hvirvled om mig, øine, stemmer, skridt. Laengst ude blev aftenrødmen gjennemboret af høie taarne og spir.[70]

The lack of mutual trust and communication has serious consequences. In Korset it results, along with other contributing factors, in Rebecca's suicide. During this last stage of the couple's relationship the primary conflicts between the narrator and Rebecca arise over Rebecca's past. The man does not seem to have had a past, but in accordance with Obstfelder's "Diskussjon" in Nylaende, he would probably have kept himself pure for the true love to come. In the very first phase of the relationship the man has no desire to know about Rebecca's past. He is content just to have her come to him whenever she wants to. The conversations with Bredo have the effect of making the narrator more possessive. The narrator and Bredo show at times the same characteristics in their relationship to Rebecca. The narrator, like Bredo, wants to be in complete control of Rebecca at all times, to the point of knowing what her thoughts are. The woman appears to want a relationship based on

mutual trust, a relationship where one party does not continually have to declare and prove love and forever assure the other with caresses and promises. The narrator begins to resent that he had not always known Rebecca, that he had not fathered her child, that he did not know every detail of her life. This unrealistic desire, a desire for intimate knowledge and power, precipitates the downfall of the man, indeed, both men; as soon as they demand complete and indiscriminate ownership, the woman eludes their grasp. Rebecca mentions in her letter that she is so afraid that the narrator should ask about her past:

> Jeg har lenge anet, at det maatte komme noget. ... Du har aldrig spurgt mig, om hvad jeg har oplevet, og jeg har aldrig sagt dig det. Jeg vilde det saa. ... Jeg vilde vaere det deilige for dig, som du ikke vidste alt om. Havde jeg fortalt dig alt, da vilde du ha taenkt saa meget paa det og lagt saa meget i det. Jeg vilde vaere til for dig bare saadan som du saa mig.[71]

She is afraid that he shall deride her and push her away if he learns about her past. She wants him to know that although there have been other men in her life, she has from the time they first met always been "tro og ren og kysk".[72] All her life she has been longing to meet the man for whom she was created and who was created for her. This belief of Rebecca's in something so "umaadelig stort ... saa vidunderligt"[73] dominates her account of the relationship. It is the sort of sentiment that one could quite easily imagine Obstfelder himself holding and voicing. Rebecca does not quite believe that this really is happening to her, since normally, having been disappointed in love before, she would not have entered into such a relationship. However, in her diary she reveals how it was something stronger than her will which pushed her toward the narrator. None the less, it was also

Bredo's sad eyes ("mørke, tunge øine"[74]) which compelled her to seek his company once more. Thus, Rebecca appears not to be able to control these forces, which alternately have positive and negative influences on her life. After giving in to Bredo she decides to take the consequences and kill herself because she feels that she has done irreparable harm to her real love. The scene between Rebecca and Bredo is not described by Obstfelder but it would be appropriate to use Munch's Aske as a visual representation of it. Aske, painted in 1894, and later repeated in other media, depicts a woman and a man in a landscape. The frontal woman, standing upright, is grasping her head and hair with both hands, while the seated man, shown in profile, is hiding his bent face in his hands. Stylistically and compositionally the man looks somewhat like the man in Munch's work Melankoli (also called Aften), oil 1892-93, which was much praised by Christian Krohg when first exhibited. Aske is traditionally interpreted as depicting woman glorifying in her power over the male. Benesch's comments are typical:

> The painting Ashes portrays man and woman after the Fall. He cowers in one corner of the picture, broken, lack-lustre, melting away into a trunk of the sombre pine forest that runs round to the front of the picture like a frame. She is shown full face, triumphant, regaining her composure yet infinitely poignant as she stands with arms flung back behind her head with its streaming locks as if in a gesture of silent despair, her gaze spanning time until she perceived the end.[75]

In his thesis Boe advances the interpretation that the futile man is a projection of Munch and the frontal female is a "personification of the wanton woman".[76] The couple is depicted in a barren and sterile landscape which has been consumed by fire and is now just like

ashes. Boe further equates this to the man's and woman's love, once viable but now consumed. We would like to disagree with Boe's and I. Langaard's[77] burnt landscape interpretations, as the painted and graphic representations show foliage on the trees. These interpretations are good examples of how a title has led scholars to suppositions that do not correspond with what is actually depicted; in other words literal meanings of titles take precedence over looking at the works themselves.

The woman in Aske is commonly interpreted by critics as having demonstrated her power over the male by having intercourse, after which he is crushed, while she rejoices. An exception to the above interpretation is expressed by Brynildsen who describes Aske as follows:

> Vi ser manden og kvinden efter kaerlighedsakten. De har haft den forjettede oplevelse, men den kunne ikke forene dem og gi dem det de søkte, for i vaart innerste er vi alltid ensomme...[78]

This perceptive interpretation supports our views in as much as it is obvious by close examination of the work that both the man and the woman are distraught. The couple in the work are portrayed as unhappy since they realize that the bonds, psychological and physical, which previously strengthened their relationship, have lost their meaning for both, a point also made by Timm.[79] A similar interpretation emerges from studying Korset where the sculptor is crushed because he understands that he has lost Rebecca for ever after she painfully realizes that she has betrayed her ideals. In this instance Aske can be taken as a visual metaphor of the situation in Korset.

We have already examined Munch's Vampyr and endeavored to give an alternative interpretation to

the one most commonly given. While we do not share the traditional interpretations of this ambiguous work, there are elements in Vampyr that bear a certain resemblance to the narrator's reaction when he discovers that Rebecca is visiting Bredo. This incident actually occurs before the couple's happy months at the seaside, but it applies to this phase of their relationship primarily because the narrator becomes more aware of his ambivalent feelings concerning the relationship. The narrator has heard Bredo's and Rebecca's voices through the door and is nonplussed. He becomes aware that she means more to him than he had admitted to himself. He also finds that he has feelings about her and their relationship, feelings which now affect him psychologically and physically. He does not understand himself and he does not quite understand Rebecca either. He says:

> Jeg havde git hende mit hjerteblod, - mens jeg havde strøget hendes haar, hun havde suget af mit hjerte. Og jeg havde ikke vidst det.[80]

These comments strongly parallel the traditional interpretations of Vampyr, certainly those given by Przybyszewski, Moen, and Digby where the woman in Munch's work is seen as a bloodsucking creature. However, the narrator immediately after the above statement reassesses their relationship and wonders:

> Men hvordan kunne hun saa se slig paa mig? Og hviske slig ind i øret mit, at jeg var den eneste, hos hvem hver fiber, hun eied, følte sig hjemme, og ikke mistroisk?[81]

While wanting to believe her expressions of devotion, the narrator questions Rebecca's behavior and remains perplexed at the inconsistency of her actions and feelings toward him. This inconsistency in Rebecca's and the narrator's relationship and the ambiguous interpretations of Vampyr are typical of the two

artists. They are aware of the concurrent positive and negative aspects in man-woman interactions. These extremes enhance the impact of the situations facilitating increased interaction between the works and the reader or viewer.

The next disturbance in the relationship is characterized not so much by mental torment as by mental separation. Communication between Rebecca and the narrator is disintegrating, thus causing them to retreat into their separate worlds. The narrator perceives that Rebecca is sometimes in a different world, a world of which he is not part.

> Det var undertiden jeg syntes hun gled bort fra mig. Jeg kunde holde hende om livet, og pludselig kunde det kjendes i mig, somom jeg var blit saa ene. Naar jeg saa paa hende, var hendes øine inde i en verden jeg ikke vidste om.[82]

Rebecca admits to having been unable to maintain the delicate balance in their relationship and observes:

> Men saa blev du urolig igjen. Eller var det mig, som blev det først? Var det hos mig, det begyndte? ... Jeg havde ikke alt det jeg vilde gi dig. Jeg kunne ikke vaere det jeg skulle vaere ... Og kan du forstaa, hvor det var skraekkeligt, at min fortid kunne ikke udslettes? Den vilde altid staa imellem.[83]

Both individuals wanted each other, they loved each other but, as Rebecca said, "det er forbi ... Men det er forbi. Det."[84] The mutual trust was gone, the desire to freely give to each other without questions being asked, with no strings attached, was lacking. The impression is similar to that evoked by Munch's paintings To Mennesker (De Ensomme), Frigjøring I, and the center couple in Livets Dans. In these works the relationship is not close, the people shown look as if their relationship might develop in either direction, either closer together or

further apart; this situation is similarly expressed in Korset through the male protagonist's passive attitude toward what fate will bring - be it a "bryllupssalme" or a "sørgemesse".[85] In To Mennesker (De Ensomme) and the couple in Livets Dans no physical or spiritual relationship between the two people is secured. The couples are to be interpreted as either detached from the situation or mentally unprepared and incapable of coping with each other at this particular time. Frigjøring I depicts a woman facing the sea and a man facing the viewer. There is no real physical bond between the couple except a visual or symbolic one through the strands of the woman's hair. This work has usually been interpreted as a man trying to get out of a woman's grasp but not being completely successful in his endeavors. In our view this work also yields an alternative and a more positive interpretation, particularly if we compare it to two situations in Korset. The first one refers to the period when the narrator is emotionally tied to Rebecca, because he wants and loves her, but where he will not open his whole being to her. In the second situation Rebecca, while still loving the narrator, feels the relationship is in jeopardy. In both situations she is the decisive figure, and like the woman in Frigjøring I, turns away from the man.[86] The symbolic strands of hair uniting the couple in Frigjøring I correspond to the tender feelings that still exist between Rebecca and the narrator. The man in the visual representations, Frigjøring I and Livets Dans, is depicted as concentrating with closed eyes, perhaps struggling to make up his mind. Both the woman and the man are obviously unhappy about the direction their relationship has taken and each is

trying to determine what is the best solution. Likewise Rebecca has shown her devotion but she also feels she has to maintain herself, shelter herself from destruction though it may mean eventual separation from her beloved.

In the final stage of the narrator's and Rebecca's relationship there is nothing of the impassivity of To Mennesker (De Ensomme) and Livets Dans or the symbolic ties through the hair as in Frigjøring I and Frigjøring II. Rebecca has decided that she cannot hope for the relationship with the narrator to be mended after she had returned to Bredo. She also feels unworthy of continuing the relationship as it would no longer remain true to the high goals she had set for herself. She would rather take her own life with the hope for a spiritual cleansing process and rebirth to continue the relationship in another world. Woman is here shown as the active and decisive party, although she was not so when she surrendered to Bredo, knowing the consequences of that act.

While Rebecca and the narrator are the most important characters in Obstfelder's novel, Bredo and Rebecca's first husband are also significant. They enhance and illuminate the primary characters by introducing elements of conflict. In Korset we are introduced to two triangle situations, one where Bredo is the third party, and one where Rebecca's former husband is the third party. It is interesting that, although Bredo is the one who physically created the destruction, Rebecca's husband is the one whom the narrator hates and whom he feels has caused the destruction.

Rebecca's former husband is quite different from the narrator and Bredo. He is a straightforward man, one for whom life is uncomplicated. His attitude toward women is simplified by his views - he wanted Rebecca for her body. He did have a relationship with her for a while, but then she left him. It is not until the end of the short novel that he is introduced to us as an earthy person who speaks with irony of his feelings, which he refers to as his "anden klasses finfølelser" which had been crushed by Rebecca's "kvindehael".[87] Throughout the conversation with the narrator Rebecca's former husband delights in the recollection of the physical relationship he and Rebecca once had.

A comparison imposes itself between Rebecca in her stages of development and Munch's Kvinnen, although it is also possible to compare the three men in Korset to the same painting. Kvinnen, oil ca. 1894, is one of Munch's more controvercial paintings, which he later executed in other media. The painting is also called Kvinnen i tre stadier and Sfinx. Kvinnen, first exhibited as a painting in Stockholm in 1894 and listed in the catalogue as number 62 Sfinx, had the following quotation from Gunnar Heiberg's play, Balkonen, 1894, attached to it: "Alle de andre er en. Du er tusen".[88] We know from Obstfelder's letters that he was in Stockholm while the Munch exhibition was open and that he wrote a review of it for a Norwegian paper, a review which was not published probably because it arrived at the paper after the exhibition had closed.

Kvinnen depicts three women with a sensual full length frontal nude in the center flanked by a woman dressed in black facing the viewer, and a woman dressed

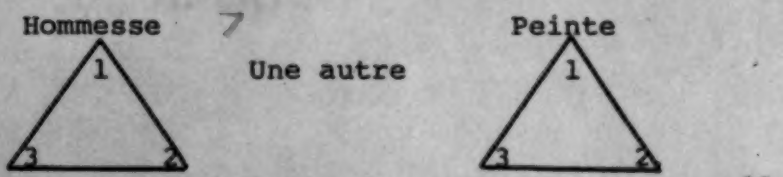
in white looking toward the sea. The tripartite configuration is reminiscent of Livets Dans, but Kvinnen preceeded Livets Dans by half a decade. The composition of three women is a frequent motif in Munch's works, as it was already used as far back as 1893 in Symbolsk Studie. Another example is Amaryllis, a vignette composed for Alpha and Omega, 1909.

If we use Kvinnen as a metaphor to explain the men in Korset, then the narrator would be analogous to the woman dressed in white, the woman turned toward the sea, a figure which has a rigid philosophical outlook concerning relationships to the other sex, but an outlook which is relatively innocent and inexperienced. The center figure would be symbolic of Rebecca's former husband, a person who is decisive, active, sure of his desires, uncomplicated, and honest and communicative about his feelings. Bredo would then be superimposed on the figure to the right, the woman dressed in black. Sorrow has touched him, his love has disappeared, and he feels his creativity, his joie de vivre, has eluded him. Rebecca refers to Bredo's "mørke, tunge øine"[89] as being indicative of his state of being, and he himself swears that if he can find her again he "skal aldrig vaere mørk, aldrig mørk".[90] Bredo is a good example of a person who has lost what Ibsen in Ghosts calls "livsglaeden" (the joy of life). It is enlightening to note that Ibsen himself was especially interested in this particular painting and had it explained to him by Munch at the exhibition at Blomqvist, Oslo in the fall of 1895. Munch gave an account of the conversation almost 30 years after it took place. In it he pointed out that while Ibsen was interested in all of the paintings contained in the exhibited Life-Frieze he paid

particular attention to Kvinnen which was described to him by Munch as depicting the woman who dreams, the woman hungry for life, and the woman as a nun. Munch also felt that Ibsen had used Kvinnen and other of Munch's works as inspiration for his drama Naar de døde vaakner, 1899.[91] Ibsen's three female characters in the play, Maja, Irene, and the nurse, are indeed reminiscent of the women in Kvinnen. Ibsen meant a great deal to Munch who executed a number of paintings, drawings, and graphic works related to the writings of Ibsen.

In spite of the complexity and interest generated by Kvinnen critics have not been profuse in their explanations of this work. By way of an early example Strindberg in La Revue Blanche supplies only a graphic interpretation:

Trimurti de la femme



[92]

More recent criticism, according to Digby, has not been any more successful in providing an insight into this work. While he himself takes the position that Jungian psychology can advance an interpretation, he merely points out that the main reason why Munch cannot integrate these three aspects of woman, the Mother figure, the physical woman, and the anima or soul woman, which hold such prominence in Munch's own life, is because his "Mother figure ... is negative, inhibitory".[93]

Kvinnen is an attempt at portraying the complexity and the eternal riddle of woman. Munch's own comments

about the work are to the point:

> Mystikken fra en hel utvikling samlet i et- Kvinden i sin forskjelligartethed er Manden et Mysterium - Kvinden der paa en gang er Helgen - Hore - og en ulykkelig hengiven.[94]

As pointed out earlier he himself chose Heiberg's words from Balkonen, "Alle de andre er en. Du er tusen", (All the others are one. You are thousands) as being germane to this painting. Obstfelder, who was quite familiar with the play and had even defended it after its première in Copenhagen,[95] has Bredo express the following in Korset:

> Og det er altid den samme kvinde. Der er tusen, ja hundretusen maend i verden. Men der er blot en kvinde, blot en eneste en. Det er den samme kvinde, som er i alle kvinder...[96]

Similarly, Hans Jaeger, in his novel Syk Kjaerlighet, written and published in Paris in 1893, describes one of his characters as:

> Og saa rar som Di er - Di er ung pike og Di er moden kvinde. Di er dame og Di er tøs, og Di har hundrede ansigter.[97]

These comments by some of Oslo's avant-garde, while not identical, parallel each other in terms of the attitudes this generation of writers and artists had about the complex and manifold nature of woman - attitudes to be viewed positively as well as negatively by the contemporary intellectuals.

In some versions of Kvinnen we are shown a male to the far right - not quite included in the content of the work as he is usually separated from the three women by a natural object such as a tree trunk. That a person of the opposite sex is included could be construed to mean that it was through a relationship with the opposite sex that changes occur. This interpretation would naturally coincide with Korset,

as Rebecca would be superimposed on the male to the far right in Munch's visual depiction. The male could, of course, also signify all of the three men in Korset and Rebecca be symbolized by the three female figures.

In addition to using Kvinnen as symbolizing the three men in Korset, we could look at this painting as a pictorial depiction of Rebecca. As a young woman (white figure) she is longing to participate in life but not yet physically or emotionally ready, an analogy to the narrator's representation of Rebecca as he imagined her to be as a young woman. The center figure in Kvinnen, the frontal nude, would symbolize Rebecca as she was during the couple's few months of happiness. Here she was for the first time fully enjoying life, life in all its physical and emotional facets. Obstfelder always insisted on having the psychological and physical needs fulfilled in order to achieve complete happiness and satisfaction, and we might postulate the same being the case regarding Munch. Some works are illustrating that such a balance did not exist for the couples depicted: Aske, To Mennesker (De Ensomme), Livets Dans, Frigjøring I, and Frigjøring II. The center woman in Kvinnen is symbolic of happiness, while the center couple in Livets Dans may be said to aspire to such a state but is unable to reach it.

The woman to the far right, dressed in black, would be symbolic of Rebecca when she, by visiting Bredo, had betrayed her promise of staying "tro og ren og kysk" to the narrator.[98] She then decided that she must kill herself, she could not remain alive, but would die with the hope of a reunion in another, non-earthly,place. This black figure might also be symbolic of Rebecca as

she was before she met the narrator. She was no longer young and inexperienced, but she was not happy, she was not a fulfilled person.

The narrator mentions several times how Rebecca changed in the course of their relationship. This would further support our use of Kvinnen as a visual depiction of the changes taking place in a single woman. The narrator says toward the end of their relationship that wrinkles that had once disappeared had begun to reappear in her face and that her eyes were dull, but just before the time of happiness started he relates:

> Hun kom. Men hun var blitt en anden. Der var kommet noget nyt i øinene. Jeg havde trot de var blaa. Nu var de dybgraa. Hun holdt hodet paa en anden maade.
> Hun var blitt langsommere, somom hun nød sin laends vuggen, tausere, somom hun hørte efter hvordan hendes bryst aandede.[99]
> .....
> Jeg vilde fortaelle om, hvordan hun, hvis ansigt var gammelt, trist, da jeg saa hende første gang, forvandledes, der kom nye træek, der udslettedes rynker, hendes øine fik farve. Hver dag gjorde hende yngre. ... Til slut var det som hun fordobledes for mig. Pigens tendre slankhed vugged in hendes yppighed, jomfruens haab mod det hemmelighedsfulde glimted og glimted inde i det ansigt, som livets sorg havde skrevet sin smerteligt deilige sang paa.[100]
> .....
> Tilsidst var det som hun fordobledes for mig. Inde i hendes yppighed saa jeg pigens tendre slankhed bugte sig, jomfruens undren mod det hemmelige glimted og glimted inde i det ansigt, som livets sorg havde ridset sine smerteligt deilige runer paa.[101]

These sensitive descriptions of Rebecca by the narrator indicate how she through her love is transformed. She cannot achieve such changes by

herself but only through a relationship with a man.

We have previously mentioned that both Obstfelder and Munch used hair symbolism, but eye symbolism is also important. We shall mention only one example here, where Obstfelder writes in Korset:

> Hun kom. Men hun var blitt en anden. Der var kommet noget nyt i øinene. Jeg havde trot de var blaa. Nu var de dybgraa,[102]

and Munch writes in his prose work Alpha and Omega:

> Omega's eyes used to change colour. On ordinary days they were pale blue, but when she looked on her beloved one, they became black, with crimson spots in the black,and it then happened that she hid her mouth in a flower.[103]

In both cases the change of color is related to love, as were Rebecca's physical transformations in Korset.

The narrator in Korset says that he does not know much about women which is why he questions in his mind if it really is Rebecca that is depicted in Bredo's sculptures. Is it not because he is thinking only of her, he wonders. He continues:

> Jeg saa hende i alt! Jeg fandt hendes bevaegelser i alt jeg saa. Alle kvinder blev til hende. Hele verden var hende.[104]

These last words are somewhat similar to what Bredo says about woman:

> Og det er altid den samme kvinde. Der er tusen, ja hundretusen maend i verden. Men der er blot en kvinde, blot en eneste en. Det er den samme kvinde, som er i alle kvinder...[105]

Heiberg said in Balkonen, "Alle de andre er en. Du er tusen".[106] These above statements about woman, expressing nearly the same sentiment, had been for some time topics of discussion within intellectual circles in Oslo. The narrator wonders if he and Bredo see the same things in woman, and, following other dialogues between himself and the sculptor, he questions

why an instantaneous understanding and intimacy have sprung up between them. Later he speculates that it was perhaps through Rebecca that they had been brought together.

It is possible to hypothesize that Bredo is depicted as the active mirror image of the narrator, and actually there is one incident in Korset which would support this, namely where Rebecca comes to see her child in the park and the narrator is there. He follows her, but in his usual passive fashion:

> Jeg fulgte efter uden at sanse, at jeg gik. Det var som var jeg ikke laenger til.[107]

Of course she disappears before the narrator can catch up with her. In another instance Bredo has gone to the park to look at the child and give it gifts. He saw the mother and ran to catch her. In both cases Rebecca disappeared from the men, like she did in real life, but at least Bredo tried to catch her.

The literature on Obstfelder indicates that the figure of Bredo was based on the Danish sculptor, Anders J. Bundgaard, whom Obstfelder had met in Paris and Copenhagen. Very little scholarly material is available on Bundgaard. It is of course a rather obvious thought to compare Bredo with Munch. Munch could and would create the most intimate lines and thoughts of woman in his art. But an obvious difference between the two artists is that Bredo wanted to keep Rebecca, while Munch supposedly strongly disagreed with ties of that sort. But maybe Bredo, who at first had wanted to keep Rebecca on his terms only, had not taken into account the woman's need for "aerbødighed for en kvindes smil ... en kvindes lykkesmil".[108] This emphasis on an abstract quality is akin to

Ibsen's use of "livsløgnen" (life-lie) in The Wild Duck and "livsglaeden" (joy of life) in Ghosts, undefinable but dominant qualities that were so important for his characters in order for them to be fulfilled, at ease with themselves and the world. It has already been mentioned that Ibsen played a significant role for Munch, but it is more problematic to determine his importance for Obstfelder, although we know from a letter that Obstfelder had visited Ibsen and was very proud to have been invited.[109] Obstfelder always spoke highly of Ibsen.

As previously discussed the reassessment of women and their role in society were prominent topics in Norway in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and in Korset we encounter Obstfelder's views several times. Obstfelder uses all the characters, but primarily the sculptor, as his mouthpieces. We are presented with Bredo's views on women several times in Korset. In the first instance he appears to be positive toward women, he feels that men should show more deference toward women, and that man in general should not torture himself or other people. In the second instance he had said to the narrator:

> Kvinden er som en guirlande. Hun er i alt, hun er som en farlig vedbende ... Kvinden er et fantom, der vandrer usynlig imellem os, paa hjerter og hjerner, og har vandret saadan fra urtid af, den evige Eva. Se det er det farlige: Vi gjør den enkelte kvinde til kvinden, - kvinden, fantomet mellem os.[110]

In spite of this negative opinion he still wants women, but insists upon knowing where they and their thoughts are at all times. He comes across as a bitter man, but one who knows life. He also has his own opinion of women, an opinion not always complimentary to the female sex. Dedekam says about

woman in Munch's art that

> ...kvinden opfattes som den aandelige skabende mands fiende, der drager manden ind i sine drifters tjeneste, til mandens tilintetgjørelse og slegtens fortsaettelse...[111]

This would not quite apply to Bredo, nor for that matter to Munch. Bredo has in him a duality in that he idealizes women in his art, but is contemptuous of them in his conversations with the narrator. Obstfelder appears here to indicate, that while Bredo's intellect supports his unfavorable view of women, his art, created partly by his hands, partly by his brain, shows rather a glorification of woman, more precisely of one particular woman, Rebecca, as indicated during the narrator's visit to the studio. Bredo's depiction of woman appears to be factual and naturalistic but with psychological insight, while he in discussions is much more subjective and sweeping in his statements. This would be analogous to Munch's artistic creations and his reported statements regarding women. Bredo is at odds with his own thoughts in that he, on the one hand, denounces woman as a "snigende fantom" and the perpetual Eve,[112] while, on the other hand, he preaches deference for a woman's smile of happiness and clearly desires Rebecca. Bredo's last monologue in Korset illustrates his breakdown. Because he cannot live without Rebecca, he cannot come to terms with himself, and he promises to change completely if she will return to him. He cannot adjust to another man being her lover. It would be appropriate to use Munch's Sjalusy to illustrate Bredo's situation. Sjalusy, oil ca. 1894-98, lithograph 1895, depicts a courting couple in the background with the anguished face of another man shown in the very foreground. Bredo could be compared to the jealous man in the foreground with Rebecca and her new mate in the background. But previously

the narrator had been depicted in this same situation while Bredo and Rebecca had represented the couple in the background, and again this happens toward the end of the relationship. On that last occasion, however, both the narrator and Rebecca's former husband are the rejected suitors. What is interesting is that, even though Bredo had known Rebecca and depicted her in his art, the narrator decides not to hate Bredo - or Rebecca for that matter. He says:

> Der er noget sterkt i dette: ikke at ta afgjørelse, ikke at udtale for sig den bestemte dom om det som møder en. Det er som man selv forsvinder ligeoverfor det mangfoldiges storhed - og blir selv større, idet man lar det store drage gjennem sig i stedet for at lukke det ude.[113]

This trait of not making a firm commitment is typical of many of Obstfelder's male characters. They tend to let themselves drift along, but rarely do they express this indecisiveness as clearly as was done here by the narrator. It is not until his conversation with Rebecca's former husband that her past becomes quite sordid to him.

The turmoil that both the narrator and Bredo show at different times, depending on how badly their relationship with Rebecca is at the moment, may be said to have its visual depictions in such works by Munch as Under Kvinnemasken, oil ca. 1893, Begjaer, lithograph 1898, Mannshode mellem kvinnebryster, woodcut 1898, I Mannens Hjerne, woodcut 1897, and possibly the already discussed Henderne. The customary interpretations of these depictions have been to show woman's power over man. However, we would like to suggest that it is not woman who is creating the depicted situations, but rather it is a man who has placed himself in these various positions in relation

to a female. It is a man who puts his head between a woman's breasts, it is a man who physically (Henderne) and mentally (I Mannens Hjerne) desires a woman. Opinions commonly forwarded have stressed that the woman was the source of such depictions. This is correct in so far as she is the other partner in a relationship, but it does not necessarily follow that the woman created and sustained the above five situations. It appears to be clear from the events in Korset and in Munch's above examples that the man, who is psychologically hurt because the relationship with the woman is in jeopardy, is the one who initiates these feelings and images of woman and who sustains them psychologically and visually. All too frequently critics have interpreted Munch's art as one where the artist hated and feared women, but very seldom have they considered that it might also be that he was desirous of woman and that he did not know how to combine these opposing feelings in his mind; thus he attempted to work them out visually. This would also apply to Obstfelder, especially when we consider that there is a significant amount of autobiographical flavor to the majority of his writings. Certainly Jaeger's advice to artists was to write about their inner selves, and their own lives, and Obstfelder followed this advice to a great extent.

While it is not possible to demonstrate direct influences between Obstfelder and Munch, it has become obvious that these contemporaries held many parallel beliefs and thoughts. In Korset Obstfelder has Bredo express part of his artistic philosophy. We will examine Bredo's comments and then correlate them to some of Munch's own remarks about his art.

Bredo is void of creative power after Rebecca has left him. He is angry, partly at Rebecca, partly at the other man, and partly at himself. He feels he needs to drink to dull his hate and maintain his sanity. However, when this depression dissipates, he becomes more reflective and wonders if his distress may have a deeper significance, one that applies to his art, so he questions himself:

> Men kanske maa kunst betales. Kanske maa det Promethevsverk her i dødens rige at ville traenge ind i algudens eget tabernakel, - harmoniens hjem, - skabelsens mysterium, - kanske maa det bødes med titanens smerte... og titanens ... savn.[114]

He - and Obstfelder - do not elaborate on the exact ramifications of the Prometheus work that Bredo mentions. He would of course be referring to creativity or, in this case, sculpture specifically. The purpose of Bredo's sculpture was to depict all facets of life, eventually getting close to revealing to himself and to his viewers the innermost in life, the meaning of life. We have been told by the narrator after his visit to Bredo's studio that "alle hans ting var forskjellige, høist forskjellige ... Der var baade glaede, sorg og grubel".[115] It would be feasible, indeed revealing, to equate all of Bredo's sculptures, his Prometheus work, to Munch's friezes, first called Liebes-Fries, later extended to the now quite celebrated Life-Frieze which Heller has discussed intensively. Did Bredo not feel that in his Prometheus work he was exploring human life, the beginning, the culmination, and the end, just as Munch did? During such a creative process the artist is bound to suffer, since he is so close to the essential in the life of mankind. Bredo refers to life on earth as life in the realm of death. Does

he contrast earthly life, which is terminated with death, and eternal life, which will occur in the next world, the world after death? Or does he indicate that his view of life on earth is one of both physical and spiritual death? Bredo considers himself a special kind of a man, a titan, an artist, one that may at least attempt to discover, and perhaps succeed in discovering, that which is pertinent only to the gods.

Munch does not go as far as comparing himself to the gods but he had definite ideas about the origins of his art, origins where the artist himself is of paramount importance. Gustav Schiefler, the cataloguer of Munch's graphic works, has described Smertens Blomst, woodcut and drawing 1898, as a symbol of Munch's art. The depicted man looks life a selfportrait:

> Høyre haand griper mot brystet, hvor det strømmer blod fra et saar over haanden og ned paa jorden. Til høyre i bildet, foran mannen, vokser en blomstrende lilje op, gjødslet av blodet.[116]

Indeed, a statement by Munch, in which he claims that the creative process originates from the blood, the innermost, the primary lifesource of man, reinforces Schiefler's point of view:

> Al Kunst, Literatur som Musik, maa vaere frembrakt med ens Hjerteblod. ... Disse Bilder er gjort i Alvor, i Lidelse - det er Produkt af vaagne Naetter - det har kostet ens Blod. - - Thi i disse Billeder gir Maleren sit dyreste - Billedet gir sin Sjael - sin Sorg, sin Glaede - det gir sit Hjaerteblod.[117]

In addition Munch visualizes a closer interaction between the artist and nature:

> Naturen er det evig store rike hvorfra kunsten tar sin naering. Naturen er ikke alene det for øiet synlige - den er ogsaa sjaelens indre billeder - billeder paa øiets bakside.[118]

In the philosophies of art of Munch and Bredo, i.e. Obstfelder, there are close parallels, as they hold the views that the source of creation is unique to the artist himself and also that the creative process may indeed be painful and deprive the artist of what ordinary people enjoy as a matter of course.

We would like to conclude the discussion of this last phase of a relationship by looking at Munch's Møte i Verdensrommet, colored woodcut from 1899, and use this depiction as a visual symbol of the narrator's final thoughts.

In the last few pages of Korset, the narrator reveals how Rebecca has become his personal saint, her letters his Bible. He now wonders what happens after death. Since their love was not completely fulfilled both Rebecca and the narrator had expressed the hope that they may eventually be reunited in fulfilled happiness after their personal purification, but now the narrator admits that his earthly senses cannot conjure up a complete image of what will happen after death.

Munch's Møte i Verdensrommet depicts two nude figures floating in cosmic space. His comments concerning this work are particularly enlightening:

> Møte i Verdensrommet.
>
> Menneskjaebner er som kloder.
> Som en stjerne der stiger frem fra mørket - og møder en anden stjerne - lyser et øieblik for atter at forsvinde i mørket - saaledes mødes en mand og kvinde - glider med hver anden lyser i en kjaerlighed flammet - og forsvinder hver til sin kant -
> Kun faa møder i en hel stor flamme hvor de begge kan forenes helt.[119]

Munch's belief in complete reunification is analogous to Rebecca's longing to meet the man for whom she felt she was created. In her case, however, this predestined

relationship could never be completely joyous because she met the narrator after meeting her former husband and Bredo. Hence, in Korset as in Møte i Verdensrommet, both artists express strongly the belief that it is difficult for man and woman to sustain a relationship.

Footnotes

Part II

[1] Livsfrisen. Pamphlet written by Munch in 1918. In the Munch Museum collection, Oslo.
"conceived during conversations and emotional moods of the Bohemian time - at tables at the Grand [restaurant and hotel in Oslo] - and during walks in the light evenings".

[2] Heller, Edvard Munch's "Life Frieze", p. 68.

[3] Most relevant here would be the following poem in Samlede Skrifter, I, "Piger 1", pp. 33-34, "Hun stod paa Bryggen", p. 146, and "Regn", pp. 43-44.

[4] Przybyszewski et al., Das Werk des Edvard Munch, p. 47.

[5] Moen, Edvard Munch. Kvinnen og Eros, p. 18.
"jealousy of the surrendered and abandoned woman".

[6] Ibid, p. 16.

[7] Timm, The Graphic Art of Edvard Munch, # 33.

[8] Przybyszewski et al., pp. 18-19.

[9] Strindberg, "L'exposition d'Edward Munch", p. 525.

[10] Moen, p. 20.
"the man who feels his own inadequacy in the lovematch yields to a rival who is also the woman's superior".

[11] Samlede Skrifter, II, p. 103.

[12] Ibid., p. 105.

[13] Ibid., p. 105.
"now there is only one single large kiss in the whole world".

[14] Ibid., p. 21.
"you kiss like nobody else in the world".

[15] Ibid., pp. 44, 45, 59.
"I will, I will".

[16] Obstfelder, Breve, letters on pages 72, 133, 135, 138, and 150, and Hannevik, Brev, letters on pages 58, 68, and 144.

[17] Samlede Skrifter, II, p. 77.
"She attracted me as the sea attracts a midsummer night. I felt her breast close to me. I felt it was mine, that I could see it, kiss it. And I dared not.
I touched her brooch.
She lowered her glance.
Shortly after she said, - and it was as if the words came from deep down from something that had been hidden for many years:
- You may".

[18] Samlede Skrifter, III, pp. 227-234, "Diskussjon".

[19] Bjørnsen, Sigbjørn Obstfelder. Mennesket, poeten og grubleren, p. 74.

[20] Hannevik, Brev, p. 21.
"You, - I think it is something so new and original that to have only one girl friend. ... I believe fully that it is as you say that the true, healthy, lasting love-relationship has to be built on common interests, i.e. friendship. - Let Jaegerian theories appear ever so true I shall readily defend them, but live according to them I will not...".

[21] Ibid., p. 69.
"acknowledges the inexorable law of sensuality".

[22] Brodwall, "Sigbjørn Obstfelder. Digtning - personlighet og psykose", pp. 389-390.

[23] Hannevik, Obstfelder, p. 36.
"First it is not pure in itself, and thus has to be chastised by a sort of asceticism. But the fear appeared also to be biologically conditioned, a direct terror of woman as a sexual being".

[24] Ibid., p. 100.

[25] Bjørnsen, pp. 56-57.

[26] Ibid., p. 57.
"woman's place was not in holding an office and a position, she was born to act as the man's supporter in his struggle for existence. This place she could not fill with book-knowledge and official position, but by remaining as she had been created and had

always been".

[27] Ibid., p. 57.

[28] Samlede Skrifter, II, p. 114.
"You are a man, and you have so much to do on earth still. But I am waiting for you. I am a woman, and woman is made to give the man courage and power to do all that he has to do on earth".

[29] Ibid., p. 50.
"I wanted to tell how she changed, she, whose face was old, sad, when I saw her the first time. How new features appeared that obliterated wrinkles, her eyes got color, every day made her younger.
I wanted to tell about the happiness it was, that this was caused by me. That I had power to do this".

[30] Ibid., p. 78.
"Because for me it was life".

[31] R. Stang, ed., Farge paa Trykk, p. 8.
"the woman who submits herself - and acquires a Madonna's painful beauty".

[32] Strindberg, p. 525.

[33] Moen, Edvard Munch. Kvinnen og Eros, p. 13.

[34] Samlede Skrifter, III, p. 289.

[35] Strindberg, p. 525.

[36] Przybyszewski et al., p. 19.

[37] Ibid., p. 47.

[38] Samlede Skrifter, III, p. 290.
"Munch sees the woman as she who carries the wonder of the universe in her womb. He returns to this concept over and over again. He attempts to depict in all its horror that moment when the feeling awakens in her; he paints the cold, black shadow strongly on the wall to acquaint us intensely with it".

[39] Dedekam, Edvard Munch, p. 7.

[40] Lathe, The Group Zum Schwarzen Ferkel. A study in early Modernism, p. 347.

[41] R. Stang, ed., p. 8.

"The pause when the whole world stopped its rotation. Your face contains the whole world's beauty. Your lips crimson red as the expected fruit move apart as if in pain. A corpse's smile. Now life extends its hand to death. The chain is uniting the thousand generations which are dead to the thousand generations which are to come".

[42] Samlede Skrifter, II, pp. 264-265.
"The Belly.
"Strangle me", it whispers.
Like the hot scirocco from the dark abyss.
Then there is a pause, a long languor, and a darkness which soothes, and those two eyes, the two eyes with the new flash.
But all at once she jumps up. She rolls up the curtain.
She jumps up into the window. She is naked.
- "Do you see me?"
Inside night. Outside day.
The pale rays of the morning fall on the swelling belly of the woman.
This tall white thing between night and day was that his wife?
That hot steaming belly does it carry his child?
"Do you see me?"
- - And he slinks off in the cold daylight down toward the wharfs.
The fish carcasses stink. In the greenish grey water he sees his own face, idiotic, dead.
Does his child's beginnings sleep inside this swelling steaming belly?"

[43] Claussen, Sigbjørn Obstfelder. I hans digtning og breve. En psykologisk studie, p. 53.
"It is incomprehensible that Obstfelder, with his deep deference for the birth-giving woman, has been able to forward such a disgusting description which ought not to have been printed. A glimpse of hate is also perceived which usually is alien to him".

[44] Samlede Skrifter, II, pp. 78-79.
"... the life of people on earth, about the dance of the stars, about the mystery of death. ... I tried to make her see the lines of life from the lowest to the highest, from the innermost toward the outermost".

[45] Poem by Emanuel Goldstein, published 1892.
"Til Hende

Du er Vampyren, der suger
mit Blod, det rislende-kvikke
av Pulsens Aarekanaler,
med de isnende, dragende Blikke.

Som Ørkenens Sandbund gløder
mit Legeme braendt og forkullet,
og Vanviddets tørre Scirokko
raser, hvor Blodstrømmen rulled".

"To Her
You are the vampire which sucks
my blood, the murmuring - the quick
from the arteries of the pulse,
with shivering, alluring looks.

As the desert's sand bottom glows
my body is burnt out and charred,
and madness' dry Scirocco
rages, where the bloodstream rolled".

[46] Aftenposten, 12. December, 1938.
"... Another time in the same room," Paul continues, "Another model, this time not with dark hair, but one with fire red tresses which floated about her as outpoured blood.
- Kneel before her! he [Munch] yelled to me. Put your head in her lap!
I obeyed. She bent over me, pressed her lips against the nape of my neck, her red hair poured over me. And in a short while he had his Vampyr finished, this picture he so often later repeated in woodcut and lithography".

[47] Letter to Jens Thiis reported in Nergaard, Refleksjon og Visjon. Naturalismens dilemma i Edvard Munchs kunst 1889-1894, p. 76, note # 169.
"Vampire is really what makes the painting literary, it is in reality only a woman who kisses a man on the nape of his neck".

[48] Gierlöff in Edvard Munch som vi kjente ham. Vennerne fortaeller, pp. 132-133.
"By the way how did the painting get the title Vampire? Munch did not mean anything literary with this painting, only a woman who kisses a kneeling man on the nape of his neck. But this was in the Ibsen-time - and when people did want to involve themselves in symbolic eeriness and called the idyllic, Vampire, then why not? said Munch. The picture was then so much better than he in his innocence had believed. He rarely was concerned with titles, they made no difference in terms of painterly value...".

[49] Przybyszewski et al., pp. 19-20.

[50] Strindberg, p. 525.

[51] Moen, Edvard Munch. Kvinnen og Eros, p. 20.
"... the collapsed male figure clasped by a female figure

who sucks all strength out of him".

[52] Digby, Meaning and Symbol in three modern Artists, Edvard Munch, Henry Moore, Paul Nash, p. 51

[53] Svenaeus, Edvard Munch. Im männlichen Gehirn, I, p. 153.

[54] Manuscript in the Munch Museum, Oslo. Written by Munch.
"He felt such an urge to touch something fine and soft, to put his tired head to a soft noble woman's breast, breathe the perfume, listen to her heartbeat, feel her soft round breasts toward his cheek...".

[55] Samlede Skrifter, I, pp. 9-10.

[56] Samlede Skrifter, II, p. 93.
"She came down. Her hair floated around her shoulders. We sat down on a rock. She said:
- Now I will throw my hair around you.
Then she threw her hair around me and I was hidden in it.
- Do you love me? she said.
- I love you.
Then she pulled her hair back and said:
- Yell all over the sea: I love you.
I yelled:
- I love you.
The echo which was nearby repeated:
- I love you.
- Do you hear how it gurgles? she asked.
- Yes.
- Do you hear what it gurgles? It gurgles:
I love you.
- Do you hear that it blows? It blows:
I love you.
Then she again hid me in her hair and so we sat.
It was as if she would hide me away from something painful".

[57] Timm, p. 76.

[58] Samlede Skrifter, II, p. 93.
"again hid me in her hair and so we sat.
It was as if she would hide me away from something painful".

[59] Nergaard, pp. 38-42.

[60] Svenaeus, I, pp. 146-147.

[61] Lathe, pp. 321-322.

[62] Steinberg and Weiss, "The Art of Edvard Munch and Its Function in his mental Life", p. 419.

[63] Ibid., p. 419.

[64] Manuscript in the Munch Museum, Oslo.
"The man and the woman are drawn toward each other - Love's underground cable has directed its streams into their nerves. The wires tied their hearts together".

[65] Manuscript in the Munch Museum, Oslo.
"I symbolized the connection between the separated [people] by means of the long waving hair. - - - The long hair is a kind of telephone-wire".

[66] Manuscript in the Munch Museum, Oslo.
"when you left me over the sea it was still as if fine threads joined us. It hurt like a wound".

[67] Manuscript in the Munch Museum, Oslo.
"Even as she disappeared over the sea he felt (as if it) as if her hair, like fine threads, tied (him to her) them together - It hurt as an eternally open wound".

[68] R. Stang, ed., pp. 11-12.
"When you mention the Life-Frieze and the different pictures which are designated symbolic or literary then you must remember that there were at the same time a coordinated artistic line. ... I attempted simplification - which I by the way always have done. It was the iron construction --- the Eiffel tower. It was the tightened curve which later slackened to the Jugendstil. - The waveline, by the way, also had roots in the discovery and suspicion of new power in the air".

[69] Samlede Skrifter, "Den Forladte", II, pp. 268-270, "Byen", II, pp. 262-264, and "Norske Sommerstemninger", III, pp. 69-72.

[70] Samlede Skrifter, II, p. 85.
"The large houses in the street looked down on me like monsters with many eyes. Around me whirled eyes, voices, footsteps. Far away the sunset was punctured by tall towers and spires".

[71] Ibid., p. 106.
"I had long expected that something had to come. ... You have never asked me what I have experienced and I have never told you. I wanted it that way. ... I wanted to become the loveliest for you which you did not know everything about. Had I told you everything, then you would have thought so much about it and put so much

weight into it. I would exist for you only in the way you saw me".

[72] Ibid., p. 107.
"true and pure and chaste".

[73] Ibid., p. 112.
"so immensely great ... so wonderful".

[74] Ibid., p. 110.
"dark, heavy eyes".

[75] Benesch, Edvard Munch, p. 18.

[76] Asbjørn R. Boe, Edvard Munch: His Life and Work from 1880 to 1920, Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, New York University (1970), I, p. 197.

[77] I. Langaard, Edvard Munch. Modningsaar. En studie i tidlig ekspresjonisme og symbolisme, p. 226 and pp. 315-316.

[78] Brynildsen, "Giganten og tiden: En Munch Studie", p. 519.
"We see the man and the woman after the act of love. They have had the experience, but it could not unite them and give them what they sought, because in our innermost soul we are always lonely...".

[79] Timm, pp. 54-55.

[80] Samlede Skrifter, II, p. 70.
"I had given her the blood of my heart, - while I caressed her hair, she had sucked from my heart. And I had not known it".

[81] Ibid., p. 70.
"But how could she look at me so? And whisper so in my ear that I was the only one with whom every fibre she owned felt at home and was not distrustful?".

[82] Ibid., p. 82.
"It was at times as though I felt she disappeared from me. I could hold her and suddenly it felt in me that I had become so alone. Then when I looked at her, her eyes were in another world that I did not know anything about".

[83] Ibid., p. 113.
"But then you became restless again. Or was it me who became restless first? Was it with me that it started? ... I did not have everything of what I wanted to give you. I could not be what I ought to be. ... And can you understand how it was terrible that my past could not be erased? It would always stand between us".

[84] Ibid., p. 83.
"It is over ... But it is over. It".

[85] Ibid., p. 64.
"wedding hymn ... mourning mass".

[86] Ibid., p. 65 and p. 75.

[87] Ibid., p. 99.
"second class noble feelings ... woman's heel".

[88] Gunnar Heiberg, Balkonen (København: Gyldendal, 1902), act III, p. 493.
"All the others are one. You are thousands".

[89] Samlede Skrifter, II, p. 110.
"dark, heavy eyes".

[90] Ibid., p. 87.
"shall never be dark, never dark".

[91] Timm, pp. 42-43, translation of Munch's account. The original Norwegian version is available in R. Stang, ed., pp. 12-13.
We would like to point out that Ibsen in his drama Naar de døde vaakner has a few sentences spoken by the sculptor Rubek which are reminiscent of Bredo's sentiments in Korset. Rubek says: "I've actually had only one model. One single model - for all the work I've ever done" and "You were no model to me; you were the source of all my inspiration". Henrik Ibsen, The Wild Duck and other Plays, p. 453 and p. 463.

[92] Strindberg, pp. 525-526.

[93] Digby, p. 53.

[94] R. Stang, ed., p. 12.
"The mysticism from a whole development is united in one - Woman in her heterogeneity is a mystery for the man - Woman who at the same time is Saint - Whore - and an unhappy abandoned [soul]".

[95] Samlede Skrifter, III, "Hvor er mandated?", pp. 267-273.
Obstfelder defended the play after it had been attacked by Chr. Collin.

[96] Samlede Skrifter, II, p. 75.
"And it is always the same woman. There are thousands, yes hundreds of thousands of men in the world. But there is only a single woman, only a single one. It is the same woman who is in all women...".

[97] I. Langaard, p. 82.
"And how strange you are - You are a young girl and you are a mature woman. You are a lady and you are a wench and you have a hundred faces".

[98] Samlede Skrifter, II, p. 107.
"true and pure and chaste".

[99] Ibid., p. 77.
"She came. But she had become another. There was something new in her eyes. I had thought they were blue. Now they were deep grey. She held her head in a different way. She had become slower as if she enjoyed her hips moving, more silent as if she listened to the way her breast breathed".

[100] Ibid., p. 50.
"I wanted to tell how she changed, she whose face was old, sad, when I saw her the first time. How new features appeared that obliterated wrinkles, her eyes had color, every day made her younger ...
At the end it was as if she multiplied for me. The girl's tender slimness moved in her luxuriance, the virgin's hope toward the secretive glittered and glittered in the face where life's sorrows had written its painfully lovely song".

[101] Ibid., p. 82.
"At the end it was as if she multiplied for me. In her luxuriance I saw the girl's slimness bend, the virgin's wonder toward the secretive glittered and glittered in the face where life's sorrows had written its painfully lovely runes".

[102] Ibid., p. 77.
"She came. But she had become another. There was something new in her eyes. I had thought they were blue. Now they were deep grey".

[103] Timm, p. 77.

[104] Samlede Skrifter, II, p. 61.
"I saw her in everything. I found her gestures in everything I saw. All women became her. All the world became her".

[105] Ibid., p. 75.
"And it is always the same woman. There are thousands, yes, hundreds of thousands of men in the world. But there is only a single woman, only a single one. It is the same woman who is in all women ...".

[106] Heiberg, act III, p. 493.
"All the others are one. You are thousands".

[107] Samlede Skrifter, II, p. 76.
"I followed her without knowing that I walked. It was as if I no longer existed".

[108] Ibid., pp. 52-53.
"deference for a woman's smile ... a woman's smile of happiness".

[109] Obstfelder, Breve, p. 185.

[110] Samlede Skrifter, II, p. 75.
"Woman is like a festoon. She is in everything, she is like a dangerous ivy. ... Woman is a phantom which wanders unseen among us, on hearts and brains, and has wandered in such a way since primeval times, the perpetual Eve. See, that is the danger: we make the singular woman into the woman, - the woman, the phantom among us".

[111] Dedekam, pp. 9-10.
"Woman is perceived as the enemy of the spiritually creative man, she pulls the man into servitude through the instincts, to the man's annihilation and for the race's continuation...".

[112] Samlede Skrifter, II, p. 75.
"sneaking phantom".

[113] Ibid., p. 63.
"There is something strong in this: not to make a decision, not to express for oneself the certain judgement about what one meets. It is as if one disappears in front of the greatness of the multifarious - and oneself grows bigger while one is letting the great pass through oneself instead of closing it off".

[114] Ibid, p. 88.
"But perhaps one must pay for one's art. Perhaps, that Prometheus work here in the reign of death to go into the antichrist's own temple, - the home of the harmony, - the mysterium of genesis, - perhaps that must be paid for with the pain of the titan ... and the privation ... of the titan".

[115] Ibid., p. 59.
"All his things were different, quite different. There were happiness, sorrow, and brooding...".

[116] R. Stang, ed., p. 27.
"The right hand grasps toward the breast where blood streams out from a wound over the hand and down on to the ground. To the right in the picture, in front of the man, a flowering lily grows, fertilized by the blood".

[117] Ibid., p. 27.
"All art, literature as well as music, must be produced with one's heartblood. Art is one's heartblood. ... These pictures are created in seriousness, in suffering - they are products of sleepless nights - they have cost one's blood. - - Because in these pictures the painter gives dearly of himself - The picture gives its soul - its sadness, its happiness - it gives its heartblood".

[118] Livsfrisen, pamphlet written by Munch. In the Munch Museum collection, Oslo, p. 2.
"Nature is the eternally great kingdom from which art takes its nourishment. - Nature is not only that which is visible to the eye - it is also the soul's inner pictures - pictures on the backside of the eye".

[119] Manuscript in the Munch Museum, Oslo.
"Meeting in Space.

Mankind's destinies are like planets.
As a star which emerges out of the darkness - and meets another star - shines a moment only to disappear again into darkness - so also man and woman meet - glide together, shine in love's flame - and disappear in opposite directions -
Only a few meet in one whole great flame where they both can be completely united".

CONCLUSION

In Norwegian cultural life the last decades of the nineteenth century were rich years. Creative artists firmly established the country's reputation in several fields. The artistic community, following Brandes' advice, encouraged and stimulated discussions on moral and social issues. The semi-organized Saedeligheds fejde and Bohême fejde were movements where many social reformers and intellectuals reviewed woman's rights, her role in society, and the interrelations between man and woman. Obstfelder and Munch were actively participating in and acutely aware of the ideas forwarded through these movements but they must not be viewed as promoters of social reform. Rather they assimilated, digested, interpreted, and projected some of these current ideas through their works.

The 1890s were years when creative artists reacted against Naturalism when they felt that heredity and milieu were not the only moulding forces of mankind. Artists wanted to delve into the moody, the undefinable, the life of the soul, the subconscious, and the mystical. Art became a tool to expose what men were, rather than to graphically and scientifically forward the observed phenomena. The creative artists turned inward, and thus we find an art that is introspective, concerned with man's raison d'être, and often quite personal to the point of appearing almost autobiographical. The influence of Jaeger's Bohêmebud, where he demands that one must write about one's own life, is plainly evident.

Obstfelder and Munch were interested in each other and in each other's works which has been documented by our discussion of Obstfelder's lecture and essay on Munch and by our knowledge of the portraits

of Obstfelder that Munch created. They had many friends in common, the most important being Thiis, Krag, Jaeger, and Heiberg, who were among the leading avant-garde personalities in Norwegian cultural life, and who were to continue to make their influence felt in art, literature, and drama. Our research has revealed an abundance of indirect documentation concerning the interaction between Obstfelder and Munch, but apart from the essay and the portraits no direct communication between them has been found to date.

In terms of personality and achievement Obstfelder and Munch were quite different. Obstfelder died young and is still unknown outside of Scandinavia, while Munch lived a long and fruitful life and experienced artistic and financial success first internationally and then nationally.

These two contemporaries shared the same cultural background and upbringing and, while they travelled extensively, they remained aware of their country's values and developments. They were deeply involved in and committed to their respective art forms through which they instigated a search for and expression of subject matter which dealt with the most profound problems of mankind. We have previously demonstrated that the two artists shared an interest in the feuds, allowing current ideologies to permeate their works. Each artist's output readily lent itself to comparison with that of the other, enhancing both artists' works in the process. Obstfelder and Munch were concerned with themes basic to mankind's existence. Ortega y Gasset aptly observed that "great artists do not extend the traditional stock of subjects ... [instead] they show their aesthetic vigour in cleansing those

themes of the coarse and trivial layer"[1] so that they by their striking simplicity will again enrich man. This was in effect what Obstfelder and Munch attempted to do. While they centered on basic subject matter they were trendsetters in literature and art by virtue of the method and the insight with which they dealt with their chosen topics.

We have endeavored to examine how these two contemporary artists have depicted the interaction between man and woman. While interested in all facets in the life of mankind, this particular area had paramount importance for both men. As evidenced by his active debate and his artistic and personal writings, Obstfelder was interested in man-woman relationships. Although Munch did not contribute directly to the ongoing debate, through his art he showed a perceptive understanding of the deepest feelings and attractions between man and woman. Even during his early career his art was scrutinized and interpretations forwarded, some of which were perceptive and others which were subjective and reflected the beliefs of the scholar rather than an unbiased analysis of Munch's art, leading to many contradictory interpretations, but proving how complex Munch's paintings and graphic works are.

Obstfelder and Munch have in their respective arts some examples of relationships where the two sexes are in love with each other and are experiencing a stable and happy existence. But in other cases the depicted relationship is not tranquil. As we have shown the border between love and hate is fragile, a concept actually prominent and much discussed in contemporary literary and artistic circles. Obstfelder's short novel is characterized by the depiction of a series of tableaux for which we found parallels among

Munch's visual works. For our analysis we have examined three phases of a relationship, the beginning, culmination, and termination, and used these phases to acquire a deeper understanding of Korset and Munch's visual works.

In the first phase both artists are concerned not only with the psychological and physical changes of a maturing woman, with whom they felt empathy, but also with an emerging relationship. During this phase, Obstfelder's narrator is interested neither in permanent ties nor in a sexual relationship with Rebecca, although he enjoys being able to comfort her. Their early casual relationship moves toward a spiritual closeness, although they, like the couple in Munch's Kyss, have discovered and are enjoying physical contact. Munch's depictions, apart from Kyss, show more aggressive situations where there are definite sensual desires primarily emanating from the men, while the depicted females are either encouraging the males or still struggling to come to terms with themselves mentally and socially.

The middle and joyful phase of the relationship is exemplified by complete understanding being reached by the two persons involved. While the enjoyment of the sexual union is prominent in Munch's Madonna, Obstfelder suggests through the narrator and Rebecca that both the physical and the spiritual needs must be fulfilled to ensure complete happiness. This is consistent with the sentiments expressed by Obstfelder as early as 1887 in his essay "Disskusjon" in Nylaende. Furthermore, Obstfelder in his writings is continually stressing the need for communication between his characters, be it verbal, physical, or spiritual

communication. Indeed, it is when the communication and the feeling of mutual trust begin to break down that the established relationship also starts to disintegrate. Livets Dans is a good visual depiction of this insecure situation where the center couple is shown physically and emotionally removed, with their relationship being passive. The two artists often depict situations showing a human being at a crossroad in life, unable to know which direction to turn or what decision to make. At times the realization of this situation is caused by physical conditions, at times by psychological forces. Frequently, the moment of recognition is connected with interaction with another human being. The two artists were primarily interested in the subconscious feelings and desires of mankind, endeavoring to depict for the reader or viewer a visual manifestation of these feelings.

Munch's Vampyr is a depiction that pertains both to the culminating and the terminating phases of a relationship. It was quickly interpreted in a dogmatic fashion by Przybyszewski as denoting Munch's women generally to be destructive and bloodsucking creatures. While such an interpretation may enhance certain situations, we have suggested an alternative and diametrically opposite interpretation, one where there is a close understanding and bond between the two people, as exemplified by scenes in Korset as related by the narrator. Like other Munch paintings, Vampyr is an ambiguous work embodying both positive and negative connotations. While it is not essential to establish which of these situations is depicted, it is vital to be aware of both interpretations and not, as other critics have done, allow stereotyped or personal philosophies to be projected and

identified with Munch's art. Taking into account its complexity and ambiguity, Vampyr can be equated to both a positive and a negative situation during Rebecca's and the narrator's relationship.

The last phase of the relationship, ending with Rebecca's suicide, is marked by the deterioration of trust, communication,and interest in physical contact, primarily caused by the narrator's interest in, and jealousy of, Rebecca's past. This is a complete reversal of what he had sought when, upon first seeing Rebecca, he had not wanted to know anything about her. This desire of wanting to get to know a woman and establishing a close relationship with her was evident not only in Obstfelder's writings but also in his personal life. Although he married one and one half years before his death, the marriage did not provide him with a stable and happy relationship. It becomes evident that Obstfelder and Munch quite often created physical distances and emotional barriers between man and woman in their works, probably because they themselves were not secure and competent enough to solve such conflicts. But through the sensitive portrayals of both human happiness and insecurity they betray their perceptive understanding of the subconscious and the mysterious invisible life behind the corporeal facade of mankind.

During the last pages of Korset the narrator declares that he has resolved his feelings and is hoping for a reunion with Rebecca in the afterlife. Obstfelder here implies that the narrator may be more capable of sustaining a spiritual rather than a physical relationship.

The sculptor, Bredo, is a fictionalized embodiment of both Obstfelder and Munch. He is a creative indi-

vidual who idealizes woman in his art but is unable to sustain a relationship with her in a real situation. Like Obstfelder and Munch he is interested in all facets of mankind's life. He is a complex personality, one that is forever searching for the meaning of life - as were Obstfelder and Munch.

The following exerpt which was found in manuscript form after Obstfelder's death could serve well as expressions of both artists' philosophy:

> Mennesket er det største paa jorden, den jord, vi kjender. Manden og kvinden.
> Mennesket er det største, det fagreste, det fineste.
> Manden er ikke det største, kvinden er ikke det fineste. Mennesket, menneskesjaelen er det største, det høiste, det merkeligste.
> Menneskesjaelen er en verden, - udover jorden, udover rummet.
> Den er en verden. Men i den verden er det mørke irrgange, have af synd, af sorg, af smerte, naetter af famlen og taage.[2]

As we have shown in our study, it is evident that both Obstfelder and Munch were interested in mankind as a whole. In their later works, rather than being only interested in man and his interaction with his fellow human beings, the artists attempted to look beyond mundane situations. In Mod Lyset, 1909, Menneskebjerget, sketch 1909, and in the University Aula decorations, completed in 1916, Munch chose to explore metaphysical themes, as did Obstfelder in his last work, En praests dagbog, unfinished at the time of his death. They were concerned not only with man's existence on earth but also with what is beyond life. However, as clearly illustrated by Obstfelder's words quoted above, humanity remains central to their arts.

Footnotes

Conclusion

[1] Ortega y Gasset, Velazquez, Goya and The Dehumanization of Art, p. 14.

[2] Samlede Skrifter, III, p. 69. "Brudstykke". "Mankind is the greatest in the world, the world we know. Man and woman.
Mankind is the greatest, the fairest, the most distinguished.
Man is not the greatest, woman is not the fairest.
Mankind, the soul of mankind is the greatest, the highest, the most extraordinary.
The soul of mankind is a world - beyond earth, beyond space.
It is a world, but in that world there are dark tunnels, seas of sin, of sorrow, of pain, nights of groping and fog".

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APPENDIX

GUIDE TO MUNCH ILLUSTRATIONS USED IN THIS THESIS

The paintings, drawings, and graphic works are listed alphabetically. Dates are according to the author from which the illustration is taken.

Adjø
drawing ca. 1890, Svenaeus, # 16.

Aften paa Karl Johan
oil 1892, Langaard, p. 156a.

Alpha and Omega
complete literary and pictorial manuscript in the Munch Museum, Oslo.
translated text and lithographs, 1909, Timm, pp. 76-83.

Amaryllis
from Alpha and Omega, lithograph, 1909, Svenaeus, # 254.

Angst
oil 1894, Langaard, p. 223.
lithograph 1896, Langaard, p. 305.
woodcut 1896, Langaard, p. 337.

Aske
oil 1894, Langaard, p. 220a.
lithograph 1899, Langaard, p. 314.
drawing 1896, Svenaeus, # 312.

Aula mural decorations
Oslo university, completed 1916, Svenaeus, # 446-451.

Begjaer
lithograph 1898, Svenaeus, # 169.

Carmen (Smuget)
lithograph 1895, Langaard, p. 291.

Det syke Barn
oil, first version 1885-86, Langaard, p. 24a.

Dragning I
lithograph 1896, Langaard, p. 309.

Dragning II
lithograph 1896, Timm, # 44.

Dødskysset
lithograph 1899, Langaard, p. 315.

Elskovpar or (Par i bølger)
lithograph 1896, Langaard, p. 310.

Fortvilelse
oil 1892, Langaard, p. 155.

Frigjøring I
lithograph 1896, Langaard, p. 215.

Frigjøring II
lithograph 1896, Langaard, p. 311.

Henderne
oil ca. 1893, Langaard, p. 201.
lithograph 1895, Langaard, p. 289. Timm calls this
lithograph Lust, # 33
drawing 1895-96, Svenaeus, # 266A.

I Mannens Hjerne
woodcut 1897, Langaard, p. 344.

Kvinnen or (Kvinnen i tre stadier or Sfinx)
oil ca. 1894, Langaard, p. 216a.
etching 1895, Langaard, p. 281.
lithograph 1899, Langaard, p. 317.

Kyss
oil 1892, Langaard, p. 146.
variation with no date, Langaard, p. 147.
oil 1892, Langaard, p. 149.
etching 1895, Langaard, p. 352.
woodcut 1897-98, Langaard, p. 353.
woodcut 1902, Langaard, p. 354.

Livets Dans
oil 1899-1900, Langaard, p. 404a.

Madonna or (Elskende Kvinde)
oil, version from 1894-95 but possibly painted in
1893, Langaard, p. 203.
lithograph 1895, Langaard, p. 287.

Mannshode i Kvinnehaar
exhibition catalogue 1897, Langaard, p. 379.

Mannshode mellem kvinnebryster
woodcut 1898, Svenaeus, # 248.

Melankoli or (Aften)
sketch 1891, Langaard, p. 136.
oil 1892-93, Langaard, p. 136a.

Menneskebjerget
sketch 1909-10, Svenaeus, # 400.
sketch 1909, Svenaeus, # 401.
sketch 1909-10, Svenaeus, # 570.
oil ca. 1926, Svenaeus, # 582.

Mod Lyset
lithograph 1909, Svenaeus, # 235.
lithograph 1909, Svenaeus, # 402.
lithograph 1909, Svenaeus, # 572.

Møte i Verdensrommet
woodcut 1899, Langaard, p. 348.
drawing 1900-06, Svenaeus, # 161.

Piken og Døden
oil ca. 1893, Langaard, p. 204.
etching 1894, Langaard, p. 299.

Pubertet
oil, first painted in 1885-86, the versions now in the Munch Museum and in the National Gallery in Oslo are dated 1894 and 1895, respectively, Langaard, p. 31.
lithograph 1894, Langaard, p. 283.

Rødt og Hvitt
oil ca. 1894, Munch Museum, Oslo, # 460.

Salome
lithograph 1903, Svenaeus, # 565.

Sjalusi
oil ca. 1894-98, Langaard, p. 224a.
lithograph 1896, Langaard, p. 313.

Skrig
oil 1893, Langaard, p. 200a.
lithograph 1895, Langaard, p. 285.

Smertens Blomst or (Blodblomst)
woodcut 1898, Svenaeus, # 182.
drawing 1898, Svenaeus, # 186A.
frontispiece for Quickborn, January 1, 1899, Langaard, p. 371.

Stemmen
oil ca. 1893, Langaard, p. 200.

Straedet (Carmen)
etching 1902, Sarvig, p. 192.

Symbolsk Studie
oil 1893, Munch Museum, Oslo.

The rising Moon
from Alpha and Omega, lithograph 1909, Timm, # 43.

To Mennesker(De Ensomme)
oil 1891, Svenaeus, # 103.
etching 1895, Langaard, p. 277.

Trøst
oil 1907, Svenaeus, # 359.
drawing 1894, Svenaeus, # 59.

Under Kvinnemasken
oil ca. 1893, Langaard, p. 227.

Vampyr originally Liebe und Schmerz
oil 1893, Langaard, p. 202.
lithograph 1895, Langaard, p. 303.

Øie i Øie
oil 1893, Svenaeus, # 89.

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